ON THE ROAD TO LIBERTY

ON THE ROAD TO LIBERTY

Poems and Ballads

by

J. BRUCE GLASIER

Edited with MEMOIR and PREFACE by
J. W. WALLACE

THE NATIONAL LABOUR PRESS, LTD.
30 Blackfriars Street, Manchester; and 8/9 Johnson's Court,
Fleet Street, London

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/onroadtolibertyp00glasiala

PR
6013
G4610

CONTENTS

PAGE.

MEMOIR ..... vii—xvii
PREFACE ..... xix—xxiv
ILLUSTRATIONS ..... xxv—xxviii

POEMS (1877—1895).

A HIGHLAND IDYLL 1
THE HIGHLAND REAPERS 3
MY MOUNTAIN MAID 5
UNDER THE WYCH ELM 6
MONKLAND GLEN 8
HEY-DAY 11
A PARTING OF THE WAYS 12
THE SKYLARK 13
THE MIRACLE OF MORN 14
THE ORACLES OF NIGHT 15
A FRAGMENT: MAY, 1920 22
TRANSFIGURATION 24
TO THE EVENING STAR 25
IN ENGLAND NOW 27
JESUS OF NAZARETH 32
MICHAEL DAVITT 35
TO E. U. 36
SHE COMES IN SILKEN WINDS 38
A MAY MORN INVITATION 39
THE WINE AND JEST 40
LOVE'S CONJURATION 41
TO MY BETROTHED—MAY, 1893 42
BY WINDERMERE 43

1367167

CONTENTS

POEMS—*(Continued)*. PAGE.

Adieu 43
To Katharine 45
The Wizardry of Love 46
Epithalamium 47
To My War-Maiden Wife 48
Dark Night and Lonely Road 49
Spring in Rivington 49

BALLADS (1885—1920).

On the Road to Liberty 52
We'll Turn Things Upside Down 53
When the Revolution Comes 55
Marching on to Liberty 56
Ballad of Law and Order 58
A Toast 60
The Children's International 61
The Shan Van Vocht 63
The Rhyme of Johnny Free 65

POEMS (1919—1920).

La Commune 69
Revolution 70
The Dream of the Earthly Paradise 72
Two Invocations (To Freedom) 72
A May Day Pæan 75
A Vanished World 76
In Times Olden 77
Empyrean ..... 79—94
Appendix ..... 95—100

J. BRUCE GLASIER

" Socialism means not only the Socialisation of wealth, but of our lives, our hearts—ourselves."

THE above sentence from the last chapter of Bruce Glasier's book, " The Meaning of Socialism," gives the keynote to which his self-appointed and strenuous apostolate of Socialism for forty years and all his aims and activities were attuned in full accord. From first to last he was " a dedicated spirit," giving to Socialism, which was to him the cause of all mankind, the utmost devotion and strength of his mind, heart, and body, with a selfless singleness of aim which left all personal considerations out of sight as of no account. For its sake " he scorned delights and lived laborious days," immolating on its altar gifts which would have won him distinction in other fields, cheerfully accepting hardship and struggle, and never seeking place or popularity, but striving only and always to serve and to give of his best. And in the five-and-a-half years of his fatal illness he compelled even severe pain and weakness to be subservient to his indomitable resolution to spend every available minute of time, and every particle of his strength, in service of enduring value.

It was this obviously untainted and complete " Socialisation " *of himself*, and the underlying enthusiasm and idealism which sustained it, that gave him an abiding place in the hearts of the workers everywhere, which more showy

gifts of oratory and public prominence can never secure without it. And the memory of it, and of its wonderful heroism and beauty in the last years of his life—combined with the recognition of his many-sided gifts, sagacity of judgment and breadth of vision—will long remain an inspiration and shining example to young men and women, "spirits of the morning sort," in the days to come, and will perhaps be his greatest special gift to the movement.

By heredity and early environment he was admirably fitted for the work of his life. Born in Glasgow, March 25, 1859, he was the eldest of a family of two sons and five daughters. His father was a farmer, and Bruce's early years were spent near the coast of Ayrshire and on the island of Arran.

Bruce describes his father (in some as yet unpublished chapters of autobiography from which several quotations are made here) as "an extraordinary man," who "outclassed in force of character all the men of his neighbourhood." Tall, erect, with broad shoulders and swinging step; frank, cheery, fearless and proud; he had great intellectual power and independence of mind. He loved poetry and music, regularly gave his children verses to learn, knew Burns's poems by heart, was an outspoken Republican and Atheist, and it was from him that Bruce inherited his strongly rational and propagandist bent of mind.

But it was to his mother that Bruce says he owed "the poetical and imaginative cast of my mind, and my deep humanitarian and democratic sympathies." In an article in the *Labour Leader*, June 1, 1906, he wrote very finely and tenderly of her "heroism and toil for the little home

community under her care." "Well do I see these things now—well do I see from what love, what infinite toil of a mother's hands, much of our solicitude for the weal of others, and sense of citizenship, has come. The songs, too, as she cradled us on her knee; the stories of Wallace and the heroes; of Knox, who 'never feared the face of man'; of John Brown of Petershill, and the martyrs—was it not from these that the kindling of the flame of freedom and pity came which afterwards broke out into an insurrectionary glow?"

His mother came of a family of Highland crofters. We get a delightful glimpse of one of her uncles on page 99 of "The Meaning of Socialism." Another will be referred to later. Her father "was in his day the best beloved man in Arran. By calling a fisherman and crofter, he was a Gaelic poet, a fine violinist, a most charming singer, and was a universal favourite at country fairs and evening gatherings round the peat-fires in the farms and cottages."

After leaving school, and previously during his holidays, Bruce worked on the farm, etc., and in summer herded his father's sheep on the hills of Arran, crossing the sea in cattle boats, and once, at least, going to Ireland. This continued until his father's death.

Here is his own account of those days in Arran: "Then came the days of herding on the Highland hills, with Burns's poems turned over page by page among the heather, and the never-ceasing songs of the streams down the glens. The glory of those days with the great lonely moorlands spreading afar, the song of the skylark ringing in the blue sky, the blithe murmur of the wild bees journeying from flower to flower; the climbing of the hills and sudden

flashing into view of the wide-gleaming Western sea; the happy homeward coming in the evening with the dog leaping joyfully at my side; the men and women circled round the peat fire, the old songs, the fiddle and the dance, the legends of Celtic kings, and the dark stories of Glencoe and Highland evictions that made the women sob and the men clench their hands—these are memories which tinged my whole being, and coloured with inexpressible radiance the thoughts of Socialism in my mind in after days."

From his early boyhood Bruce had wished to become an architect, and his mother, as soon as he was old enough, had him articled in an office in Glasgow. In that city lived his mother's uncle, "Uncle Neil," for whom Bruce soon came to feel an extraordinary affection and reverence, and whom he ever after regarded as "one of the finest types of men Scotland ever produced." He was "a stern Calvinist Presbyterian in creed," but was full of the sweetest natural kindness, cheerfulness, and good humour. Through years of misfortune in later life "he bore himself with a magnanimity, patience, and upright humility that mark, I think, the highest grace of character attainable by man." He had a great love of the best literature and of science, and did his utmost to develop Bruce's kindred tastes and qualities. No wonder Bruce loved him, and became an earnest student under his guidance. "How happy I was then!" Bruce fully accepted his theology, and became deeply and sincerely religious, not only in outer observance, but in all his thoughts, aspirations, and conduct. And he looked forward to becoming eventually a minister of the Gospel, and "an apostle after the manner of Paul."

This lasted for two years, when " suddenly a great bank of cloud spread over the sky, and blotted out the radiance of my summer days." An introduction to Darwin's and other books seemed to assail the very foundations of his faith, and threw him into a fever of agonising doubt and struggle which lasted silently for a whole year. During this period he often sat reading far into the night, and then tossed sleeplessly on his bed in dreadful mental suffering and unrest. He passionately sought the Truth alone, and at last the struggle came to an end, and he emerged into the scientific Agnosticism of the period.

It was a true deliverance for the time, with greater deliverances to follow. It left him without the sustenance and joy of the highest elements of religious faith and illumination until, near the end of his life, these came to him in new forms; and it narrowed his outlook. But it was a true idealism and religious spirit which inspired his stern veracity, and his insistent digging down to the foundations of all his beliefs, and these now became concentrated on the social problems which confronted him.

He was now seventeen and his development proceeded rapidly. As a schoolboy he had written freely in rhyme, and shown exceptional artistic aptitudes, and between his seventeenth and twenty-second years he wrote a great quantity of verse, most of which he afterwards destroyed. Whatever its defects may have been, there is evidence that even in those early days he had the vision and intuitive perceptions of a true poet, and his profession involved some continual practice and study of art.

But the degraded conditions of life and work under which so many persons in Glasgow lived, and which he

witnessed daily, aroused in him an ever-deepening spirit of revolt. He saw clearly that they resulted from the power of the rich to deprive the workers of the main fruits of their toil, and he longed to help in bringing about "a state of complete social equality wherein no man could make his fellow a slave." The Spirit of Freedom was to him, as to Shelley, no mere abstraction of poetic fancy, but a living Power to whose service he vowed himself.

By the time he was twenty, and for about three years afterwards, he was already advocating Socialism on the platforms of Literary and Radical Societies in Glasgow, having arrived at it by his own course, for there was then no Socialist literature or organisation in the country. At the same time he was taking active part in Irish and Highland Land League agitations. And in 1883 he served on the Executive of Henry George's campaign.

In the summer of 1884 (Bruce now twenty-five), he formed with two or three others the first Social Democratic organisation in Scotland. A few months later, when Morris and others seceded and formed the Socialist League, Bruce and his friends took part in the secession, and established branches in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other towns. In December of that year Bruce met William Morris for the first time in Edinburgh, and was introduced to him as "one of the most enthusiastic propagandists in Scotland." Thus began an intimate friendship of which Bruce has left us a full and valuable account in the last book he wrote.

Except for a few years of such subordinate and ill-paid professional work, far below the recognised scope of his abilities, as provided the necessary means of livelihood

without impairing his complete freedom of action outside it, Bruce devoted his whole life thenceforth to Socialist work. For he saw clearly that there can be no true and noble national art of any kind, and no dignity and beauty of national life, until the whole social order is reorganised on a new basis. Then, and then only, can poetry, art, and literature, worthy of the soul of the man, become generally diffused and arrive at full stature.

The apostolate "after the manner of Paul," of which he had dreamed in boyhood, now became the reality of his life. But how different in its external character! Yet it involved the same self-sacrificing earnestness and zeal, the same missionary spirit and ceaseless journeyings and toil, the same continual spending of himself, and the same disregard of hardships, poverty, and a hostile world.

We have seen how he was prepared for it: how the spirit of past generations of Scottish life at its best; the influences of Highland hills, glens, and streams; the national love of freedom, valour, and song; and the sane, sweet, leal-hearted humanities of open-air life on land and sea—all entered into him to make him what he was, and found expression in his voice and pen. It was the protest of a noble past against the squalor of the sordid and soulless commercialism into which we have fallen, and an appeal to us to create a nobler future.

This appeal he voiced in almost every town and village in England and Scotland, South Wales, and parts of Ireland; often speaking in the open air, or wherever he could get an audience, and lodging in the cottages of the workers—of whom his intimate knowledge was unparalleled. What an influence he carried into countless

homes by his unaffected camaraderie, his sympathies, his elevation and breadth of view in conversation, his wide culture, his pawky humour, and his love of jollity and fun, as well as by the industrious writing which filled his leisure! It was indeed an apostolate "after the manner of Paul"—not only in its external character, but also in its exemplification of the love for one's fellows which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and is utterly opposed to militarism and coercion by force.

The history of his more public work has been outlined in the Memoirs which have appeared since his death, and is probably familiar to the readers of this short sketch. Here we can only deal with the things which determined his special characteristics.

Fortunate in his mother and sisters, he was also supremely fortunate in his wife. In his devotion to the Cause, in the self-denying idealism which inspired his life, and in all his aims and work, she was his equal mate and comrade, and a constant incentive and aid to his highest and best performance. And to his deep-hearted nature, his experiences as a father were precious lessons which influenced his whole life and work.

He grew continually in depth and nobleness of character and in range and amplitude of power and influence. And the last years of his life were an inspiring revelation to all who knew him.

The outbreak of the Great War, after all his work during many years for international solidarity and peace, and in spite of all efforts to avert it, was a terrible blow to him. Early in 1915 he learned that he was suffering from cancer.

At first the knowledge only filled him with a grim, silent determination to spend his remaining days in the utmost service of which he was capable, and he continued his journeyings and work as long as he possibly could. When no longer able to travel he set to work writing "The Minstrelsy of Peace," including all the references to books and visits to local libraries it involved.

Hitherto he had concentrated all the energies of his mind and body on his work as a propagandist of Socialism, and in the organisation of the movement at home and abroad on an international basis. Now most of his previous activities were necessarily laid aside, and he set himself to give the movement the best service his new conditions of life allowed, and the loftiest inspiration within his reach. Face to face with the certainty of approaching death, his essentially religious spirit sought the sustenance which his immersion in constant work had previously denied him, but which all the deeper instincts of his nature—as poet, artist, and prophet—fitted him to receive, and which under other circumstances would long ago have been his. Now he gradually awoke to perception of the wonderful new light which has for long been coming into the world through many channels, and which will—slowly and subtly, but surely—transform all our institutions and modes of living. Everything of essential value in the faith of his Uncle Neil—the losing of which had once cost him so much distress, and had left him in the dimness of twilight instead of in joyous light—was now restored to him, freed from disfiguring errors, and at one with the perceptions of the wisest seers in all ages and lands. He rejoiced in its transfiguration of all life, and in its power to heal soul and body.

Though his disease was not eliminated, its progress was arrested, and he gathered new strength. In the winter of 1918-19 he resumed his travels and work, but in the inclement weather of January he caught a severe cold, and soon after his return home was believed to be dying. To the surprise of the doctor he gradually recovered to a wonderful degree; but during the remaining sixteen months of his life was confined to bed—except when he came downstairs to celebrate his daughter's wedding, his sailor son's return home after a voyage, etc., when he was the jolliest of the company.

He often said that this was the happiest period of his life. It was certainly the most wonderful period to all who witnessed it. His worldly affairs were all settled, the burden of his previous work and responsibilities laid aside, he had already passed in spirit through the gates of death, and he now lived in the full assurance and light of immortality. Accepting present pain and weakness and the prospect of death with perfect equanimity, he grew continually more serene, joyous, tenderly considerate and loving. His chief concern had always been to give his fullest service, and he now wrote the books—" The Meaning of Socialism " and " Memories of William Morris "—which were his last gift to the community, with the heroic determination and fortitude of a martyr testifying to his faith at the stake—undergoing two severe operations solely in order that his working life might be prolonged a little. His last work was fittingly the revision of some of his early poems. For his poetic genius had come to him again, filling him with a greater happiness than he had ever known, and he wrote two new lines within an hour of his death. His last behest

to his wife was "Be glad! Be glad," and at noon on June 4, as the sunlight streamed through the windows of his room, his family saw his eyes "looking steadfastly into Heaven" for many minutes, with a rapture of perfect satisfaction and peace, ere he passed silently into wider Freedom and Joy.

J. W. WALLACE.

PREFACE

MEN and women everywhere throughout the country who have known Bruce Glasier personally, or heard him speak, will welcome the poems in this volume, because of the further intimacy they afford with one whose whole life was spent in the service of " the Great Idea, the idea of perfect and free individuals," which Whitman says " is the mission of poets." And the preceding Memoir—reprinted from the *Socialist Review* by the kind permission of the editor—will enable readers of the poems to give them their right setting in relation to the greater poem of Bruce's life, and to the circumstances in which they had their origin.

The story of the completing of most of these poems, as told by Mrs. Glasier in an introduction to two poems printed in the *Leicester Pioneer*, gives them an added interest.

At the end of January, 1919, when Bruce was believed to be very near death, an old friend visited him, and in the course of conversation expressed a wish that Bruce had written more Socialist songs. After the friend had gone, " he turned to me with a strange, wistful smile. He was then almost too weak to lift his hand. ' I have never been able to *write* songs or poems,' he said. ' At one time I used to think I *heard* them—but that was long, long ago, in the early eighties, when I was quite young, and the hope of Socialism was just dawning. I wonder——'."

" And then he made a confession to me. Downstairs, hidden away where he had thrust them in 1887, in a big file of old Press cuttings and tattered MSS., were two old note-books filled with fragments of poems. He told me that he had found that his work on them absorbed him too much; they kept him working at night in fierce emotional mood, and left him exhausted in days when, as he phrased it, ' honest Socialist agitators were needed far more than poets or architects.' ' You see,' he said, and the colour mounted to his brow, ' I *loved* the work so—it became a kind of temptation—of personal ambition—and I just thrust it away once and for all. But—if you can find the books—I would like to look at some of the fragments once again.' "

She found the books and brought them to him. " As Bruce turned the brown pages over, a sudden resurgent tide of life seemed to flow into his veins. He asked for a pencil, and swiftly, though his hand trembled so he could scarcely form the letters, he wrote in the completion of some half-dozen unfinished lines in less than that number of minutes."

From that time he began to recover strength, to the amazement of the doctor and all others. " But as soon as a real measure of strength returned to him, the poems were again laid aside to write ' The Meaning of Socialism ' and ' Memoirs of William Morris.' "

When the last line of the second book was written Bruce was attacked by influenza, and it was once again the call of his poems which helped to bring him back to life. The completion of " Johnny Free " (in gratitude to the children of the Socialist Sunday School who had sung under his window on May Day) was his first effort, and

after that he rallied again wonderfully. In spite of extreme weakness he himself completed, copied, and set in order for publication all but one or two of the poems which appear in the present volume—except some of the political ballads which had been printed—during the last fortnight of his life. The poem "Empyrean," with its 59 verses, was written complete from the rough notes of some eleven verses in the old MSS. book.

It will be seen from the above how deep and strong was the poetic impulse in Bruce, and how complete was the self-sacrificing devotion to the main work of his life which led him to renounce for its sake the satisfaction of all his instincts as poet and artist—as well as of deeper instincts still, which only found satisfaction in the enforced seclusion of his last years.

In their general arrangement the poems are placed approximately in the order in which they were written, and represent three successive stages in Bruce's work as a poet.

First, the period preceding 1887 (by which time he was twenty-eight).

Second, the period between 1887 and 1919, during which Bruce gave himself entirely to his Socialist work, and wrote no poems except some political ballads and twelve short poems addressed to his wife.

Third, the last months of his life, during which he revised and copied his earlier poems, and wrote a few new ones.

Dates attached to the poems are only given where they appear in the original MS.

The First Period. (Preceding 1887.)

The poems at the beginning of the volume are different in character from those which follow, and obviously reflect some of the influences which surrounded Bruce in his untroubled boyhood and remained with him later. The dew of youth is still upon them, and their idylls of Highland scenes and incidents are full of its joyous, full-blooded zest and open-heartedness, combined with a keen and reverent perception of all loveliness, and of the charm of unsophisticated and innocent life under natural conditions.

With the poems " The Parting of the Ways " and " The Miracle of Morn " the themes are changed. The former marks Bruce's sense of the call away from art to the service of the poor and despoiled in which he spent his life.

The four following poems give expression to his deep sense of the significance of Nature's loveliness, and to his delight in solitary communings with her. " The Oracles of Night " shows how painfully he felt the discord between the intuitive perceptions of his poet-soul and the Agnosticism in which his intellect was bound, and from which he could not free himself. As originally written the poem was only part of a longer poem he projected and then abandoned. It is concluded here by the addition of an untitled fragment written during the last week of his life. This fits in appropriately here, if it was not definitely intended to follow the preceding verses, as an affirmation of his later position.

The poem " To the Evening Star " has a special interest because he was engaged in its revision when he died. On the previous day he wrote the seven lines beginning " Thou mightest be the genius of that ideal," and the two lines following these were written within an hour of his death.

In the poem " Transfiguration " he describes briefly, but very nobly and beautifully, an actual experience (not, however, to be interpreted too literally) which to Bruce meant the definite consecration of all his after-life and energies to " man's redemption."

" In England Now " was written in 1883, after a visit in Sheffield to a workshop which the sunlight only entered very briefly and partially during a few days in the year. " Michael Davitt " was written in the same year, and " Jesus of Nazareth " in 1886. Three or four of the poems at the end of the book were also drafted in this earlier period.

The Second Period. (1887—1919.)

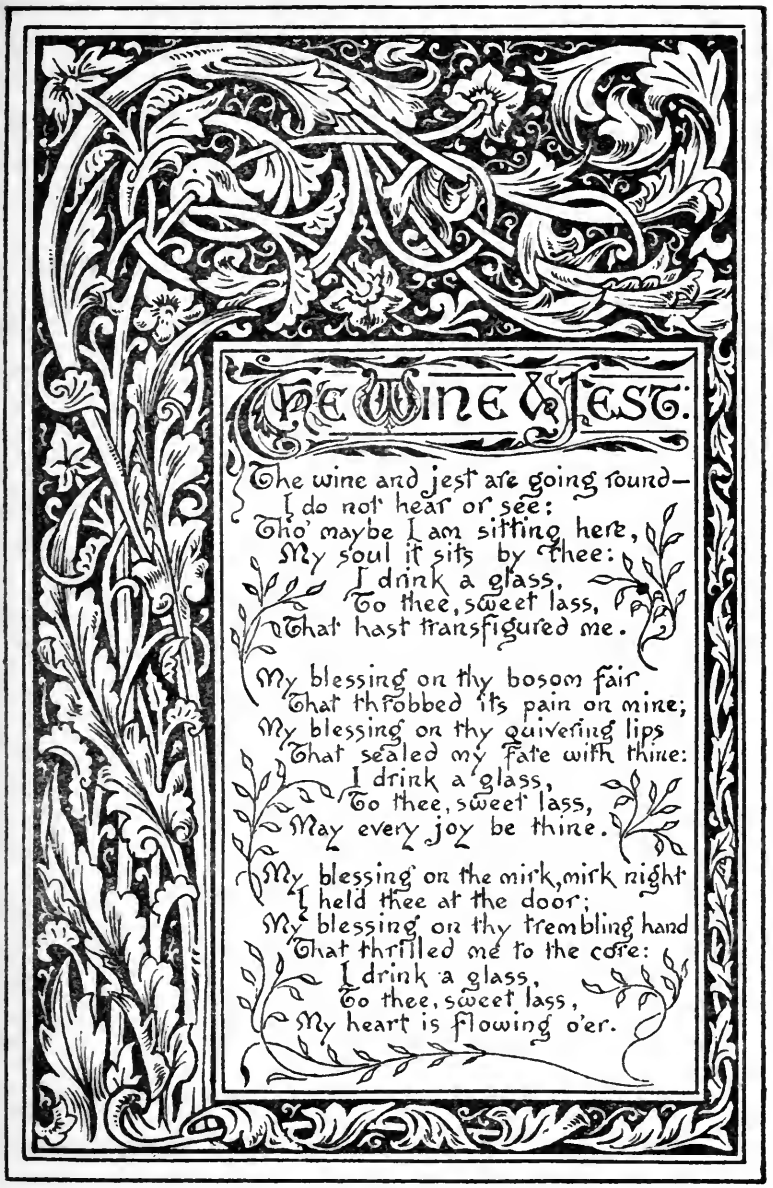
As already stated, the only poems written during this period were the political ballads and the short poems addressed to his wife.

In 1895 Bruce designed decorative borders to four of the twelve poems to his wife, which are here published, for the first time, by his express wish. It was his unfulfilled intention to do this for the whole series of twelve, but the necessary leisure never came.

The Third and Last Period. (1919—1920.)

In addition to revising and fair-copying his earlier poems, Bruce added new verses to " Johnny Free " and " La Commune," and wrote the second " Invocation to Freedom," the " May Day Pæan," the Envoy to " The Oracles of Night," and almost the whole of " Empyrean." When the reader reflects that Bruce was in the last stage of a painful and mortal disease, that he had been weakened

by two very severe operations, and that his strength had been still further depleted by an attack of influenza, this will seem a very marvellous achievement. Yet even more wonderful was the increasing illumination and radiant happiness which so sustained him during the sixteen months during which he lay bedfast that at the very end of his life it overflowed into his work on the poems—triumphing over physical disaster and weakness as if they were relatively of no account. *That* was a living poem, more poignantly sacred and beautiful than words can express.

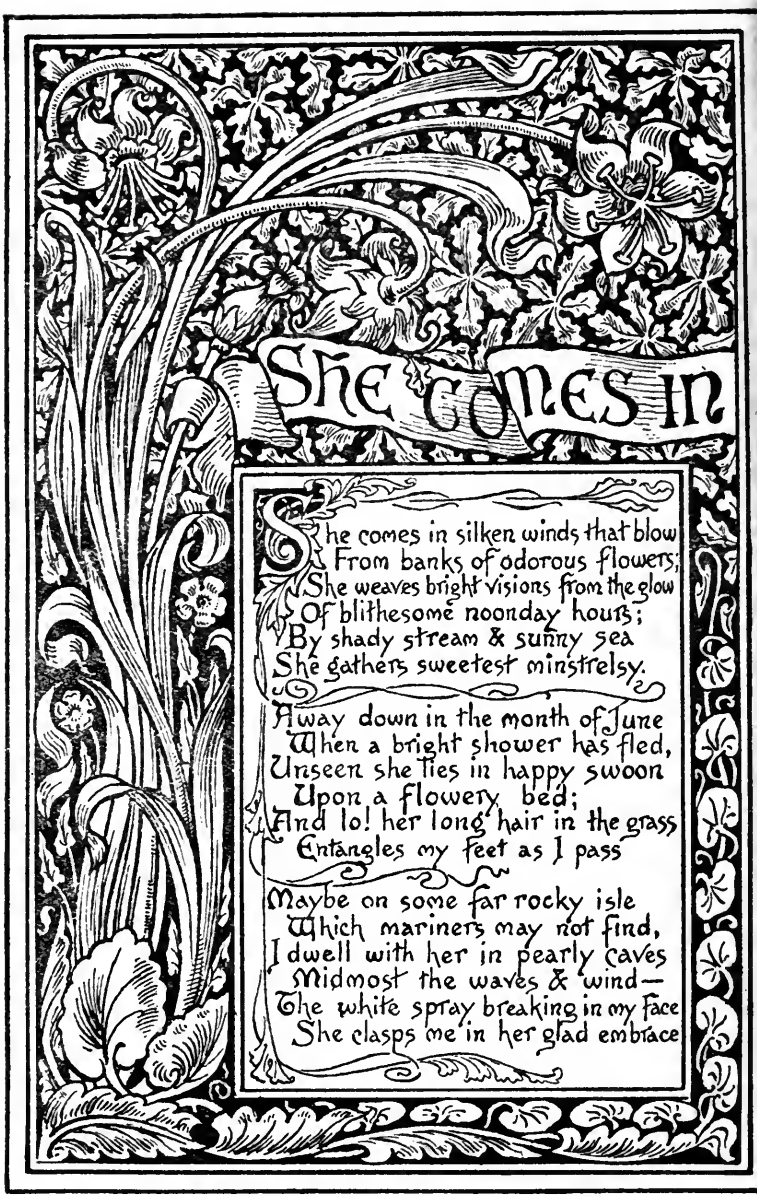


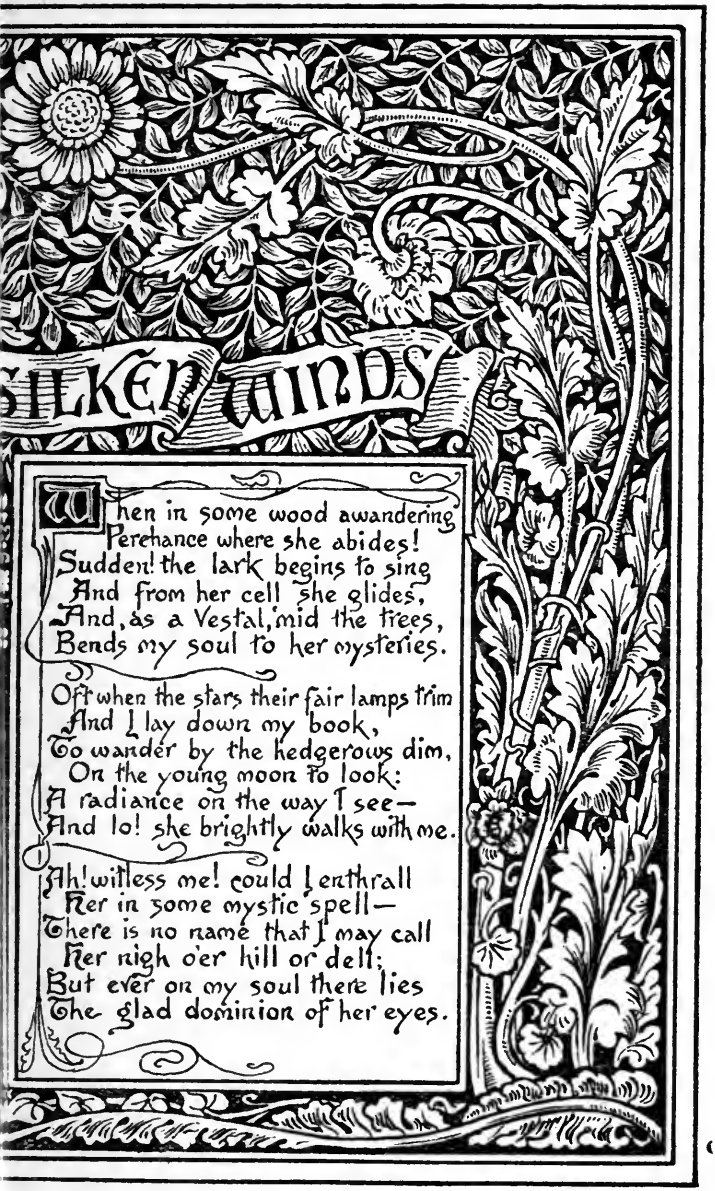
The Wine & Jest.

The wine and jest are going round—
I do not hear or see:
Tho' maybe I am sitting here,
My soul it sits by thee:
I drink a glass,
To thee, sweet lass,
That hast transfigured me.

My blessing on thy bosom fair
That throbbed it's pain on mine;
My blessing on thy quivering lips
That sealed my Fate with thine:
I drink a glass,
To thee, sweet lass,
May every joy be thine.

My blessing on the mirk, mirk night
I held thee at the door;
My blessing on thy trembling hand
That thrilled me to the core:
I drink a glass,
To thee, sweet lass,
My heart is flowing o'er.

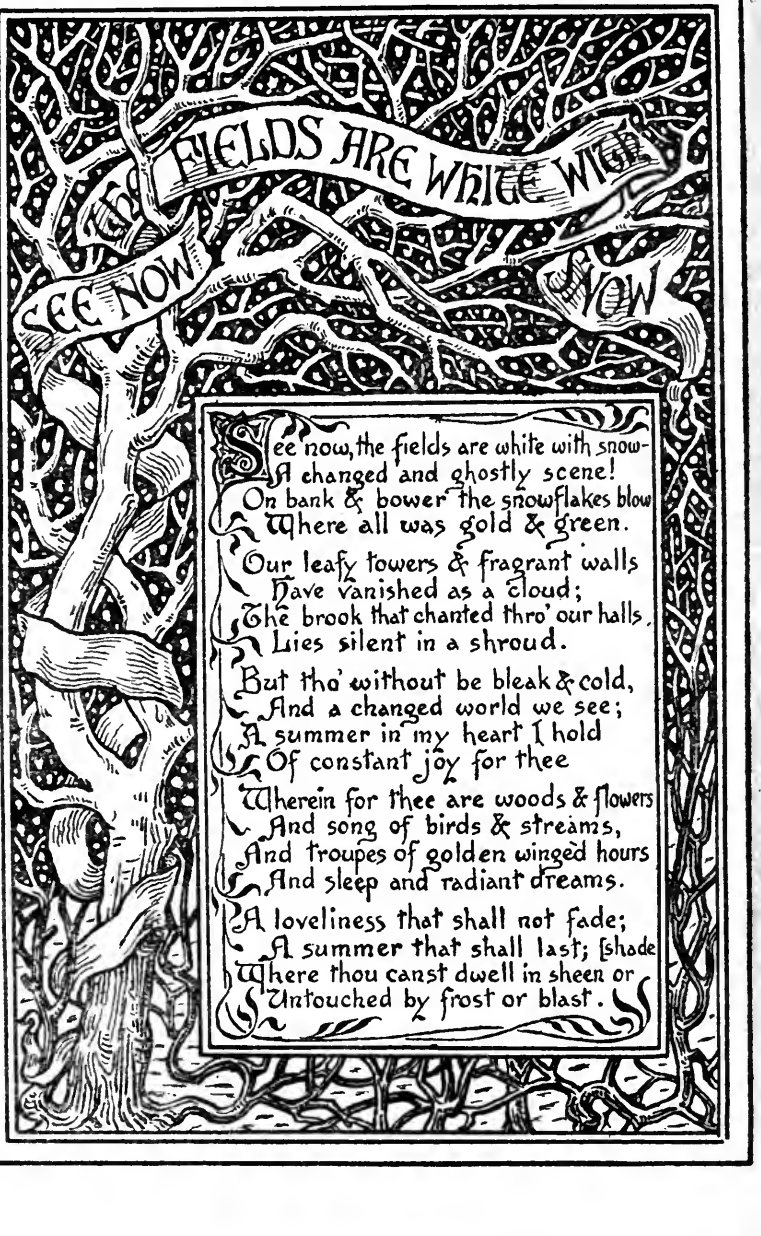

SHE COMES IN
She comes in silken winds that blow
From banks of odorous flowers;
She weaves bright visions from the glow
Of blithesome noonday hours;
By shady stream & sunny sea
She gathers sweetest minstrelsy.
Away down in the month of June
When a bright shower has fled,
Unseen she lies in happy swoon
Upon a flowery bed;
And lo! her long hair in the grass
Entangles my feet as I pass
Maybe on some far rocky isle
Which mariners may not find,
I dwell with her in pearly caves
Midmost the waves & wind—
The white spray breaking in my face
She clasps me in her glad embrace



When in some wood awandering
Perchance where she abides!
Sudden! the lark begins to sing
And from her cell she glides,
And, as a Vestal, mid the trees,
Bends my soul to her mysteries.

Oft when the stars their fair lamps trim
And I lay down my book,
To wander by the hedgerows dim,
On the young moon to look:
A radiance on the way I see—
And lo! she brightly walks with me.

Ah! witless me! could I enthrall
Her in some mystic spell—
There is no name that I may call
Her nigh o'er hill or dell;
But ever on my soul there lies
The glad dominion of her eyes.


SEE NOW FIELDS ARE WHITE WITH SNOW
See now, the fields are white with snow-
A changed and ghostly scene!
On bank & bower the snowflakes blow
Where all was gold & green.
Our leafy towers & fragrant walls
Have vanished as a cloud;
The brook that chanted thro' our halls,
Lies silent in a shroud.
But tho' without be bleak & cold,
And a changed world we see;
A summer in my heart I hold
Of constant joy for thee
Wherein for thee are woods & flowers
And song of birds & streams,
And troupes of golden winged hours
And sleep and radiant dreams.
A loveliness that shall not fade;
A summer that shall last; [shade
Where thou canst dwell in sheen or
Untouched by frost or blast.

On the Road to Liberty

A Highland Idyll

SHE stood all wonder-stricken by the field,
One sun-brown arm across the gate-bar thrown;
Her milk-pail held akimbo: thus alone,
A perfect vision to my eyes revealed.

So beautiful! My feet and heart stood still,
Transfixed a moment with the glad surprise;
A hurried challenge passed between our eyes,
Then instant proclamation of goodwill.

A garland of fair words I proffered her:
A wistful look met mine, then tinkled clear
Sweet syllables, which, wordless to my ear,
Made far-off memories within me stir.

Strangers in speech, yet from the same race sprung,—
The silver link of kinship nipped in twain!
Around us rose the giant peaks amain,
Whose glory proudly o'er our childhood hung.

Her dark brown hair fell softly from her brow,
Straying adown her bosom like dark rills,
Between the glimpses of two fairy hills
Which grudgingly her kirtle did allow.

Her petticoat high kilted to the knee;
  Her sun-kissed feet crept cosy in the grass;
  Fain, too, would I have kissed them, but alas,
I did misdoubt me of such gallantry.

Withstanding me with full, frank eyes, she bore
  The fragrant milk-pail teeming to my mouth;
  And I, though parchèd with a sweeter drouth
Drank deeply of its white ambrosial store.

A wayside briar stood my interpreter:
  Seizing the fullest rose upon its crest,
  Pricking my hand on purpose in the quest,
To taste how sweet were pain for sake of her!—

I pinned it on her gown with trembling hand,
  Her blushing cheek made pale the rose's hue;
  I kissed its fragrant petals ere she knew,
And was the richest lad in all the land.

The wild notes of the lark pealed overhead,
  The incense of the heath suffused the place,
  I hardly dared to look upon her face—
Such reverence her beauty round her shed.

Far up the hill, my waving cap did lure
  Her wistful gaze, long lingering at the gate,
  And all that afternoon I walked elate,
With snatches of old songs across the moor.

The Highland Reapers

I LIE upon the hillside on the grass,
Watching the reapers in the vale below;
The sun burns overhead with tropic glow,
The breeze rests on my brow, too faint to pass.

The flocks are grazing round me tranquilly,
The lark deep in the blue its rapture trills;
And far away, enlapped between the hills,
Sleeps as a child the blue-eyed Western sea.

It is not solitude : on rainbow wings
The butterfly flits gorgeously, the bee
Murmurs from bell to bell; with tuneful glee
The blithe grasshopper through the tall grass springs.

I hear the reapers' voices in the vale;
Merrily they sing, and laugh, and reap away;
O, who have sturdier, happier hearts than they—
Hearts bred to brave the mountain mist and gale?

Yes, merrily with laughter, shout and song,
They bind the golden barley in the sun;
Blithe lads and lasses brim of love and fun,
And tales and songs for Winter's evenings long.

O blessèd brows and breasts and swinging arms!
Sun-browned, and moist with toil's sweet cleansing flood :
Fresh stems from which the race anew may bud
And girls like apples blossom round our farms.

Now a young swain has slipped, with glowing eye,
  Beside a rosy lass and caught her waist,
  And kisses—no, she bounds with blushes chaste
Protesting from his clasp, with a sweet cry.

Down, down, half-buried in the sheaves they go,
  One over other in the merry strife;
  She pleads, he laughs, he kisses her—my life!
Her heart has not yet found its place, I trow.

Her nut-brown hair, dishevelled o'er her face,
  Her kirtle parting on her bosom white,
  Her half-reproachful eyes, have made her quite
Bewitching in her lithesomeness and grace.

Now all day long her heart will throb the more,
  The flushes on her cheek will come and go;
  And in the twilight she will note a glow
Beyond the hill-tops, unperceived before.

And in the night her eyes will flash from sleep,—
  "I did but dream," she will half-sigh, while yet
  Almost her lips feel with the kisses wet,
Almost she sees the blue sky o'er her leap!

My Mountain Maid

SHE is a creature of the dawn,
So fresh, so bright and fair,
Sweet breathing of the hay, new-mown,
And caller mountain air.

Her cheek soft-tinted as the rose
After a summer shower,
Perfumèd with the bloom that blows
In far-off Eden's bower.

The lustre of her fair blue eyes
Is pure as Hesper's light;
Her smile—O, kiss it ere it flies,
And dream of it all night!

Her heart, the home of every grace,
Is tender, warm and true;
The kindness beaming in her face
Glows in her bosom too.

So lightly steps she in the dance,
Such charm her movements show—
A troop of joyful fancies prance
Where'er her footsteps go.

And sweetly sings she as she sits
  Milking at eventide;
While I enchanted of my wits
  Stand listening by her side.

Sweet maid, may dearest life be thine;
  Thee every joy possess;
And love around thy heart entwine
  A wreath of happiness. (1877)

Under the Wych Elm

WHITHER are thy fair thoughts wending—
  In what realm?
Lying 'neath the long boughs bending
  Of wych elm:
While the sunshine amorous of thee,
Thro' the woven leaves above thee,
  Rains a shower
Of golden radiance on thy bower.

I could grudge the sun its shining
  So on thee—
On thy daisied couch reclining
  Perfectly!—
And the soft wind that caresses
Thy fair bosom where thy tresses
  Fondly lie:
While I sit and gaze on thee and sigh.

Thy bright eyes have left their beaming
On my heart;
Burdened it with sweetest dreaming—
Yea, thou art
One who hast a world created
In my thoughts with love elated,
And dost sit
Veiling thy beauty everywhere in it.

Yon clouds gorgeously reposing
In the sheen,
Are as magic folds disclosing
Thee, my queen!
In their soft and glowing whiteness,
Robed in noon-tide's perfect brightness,
Thou dost rest,
With thy burning cheeks and snowy breast.

In the twilight's shadowy splendour
When I stray,
O'er me thy enchantment tender
Is alway:
So, I stand and look and listen
'Neath the stars whose fair eyes glisten
Down on me,
Rapt in the spell of my idolatry.

Ah! what whispering persuasion
In the night!
Ah! what sweet anticipation
Of delight!
In each stir of branch and bracken
Which the quiet night winds waken
I do hear
The music of thy footsteps drawing near!

Fairest, tell me, whither wending—
In what realm
Far beyond the long boughs bending
Of the elm—
Are thy thoughts? May I come to thee,
And, as the wind and sunshine woo thee,
May I bow
And place my wreath of kisses on thy brow? (1883)

Monkland Glen

SWEET girl, since first that morn when you
Led me so blithely o'er the dew
To yon fair Glen;
Often in fancy's sweeter hours
I seek its dells and cloistered bowers
With you again!

The lofty trees that overhead
Their wondrous tracery outspread,
The twilight gloom;
The crooked paths and tangled sprays,
The twinkling, never-ending maze
Of leafy bloom;

The hermit's cell of long ago
And Calder's stream, winding below,
O'er rocky verges,
Leaping and eddying along,
Mingling in one unceasing song
Ditties and dirges.

How wonderingly we sat and gazed,
At our own happiness amazed,
Till with a start
You rose up tall amidst the leaves,
And the soft rustling of your sleeves
Fluttered my heart!

Our tardy haste! Have you forgot
How often your white gown was caught
By trailing bramble?
And how you still would lose the track
And out of odorous *culs-de-sac*
We had to scramble?

How once far down the bank you slipped
In half alarm, and how you tripped
And cast a shoe?
All's fair in war!—the valley swayed
As you with crimson cheeks prepaid
The ransom due!

How rare you looked, all petal blown!
Your dark hair tumbling from its throne
Upon your shoulders;
And with what fearless liberty
Insurgent in your foot and eye
You scaled the boulders!

Then homeward; while the setting sun
Cast our twain shadows into one
Across the field;
And with the silence of the birds,
The night came forth with shining swords
And silver shield.

And now, I often wonder me
Where, where in all the world you be,
My Monkland maid?
The many widening years have borne
Us far adrift since that fair morn:
And all things fade.

Yet still that morn keeps fresh, and you
Are young and shining as the dew:
And oft I start—
For still your glance, your blithesome trill,
Your white frock flashing down the hill
Flutters my heart!

O maid, that Glen, the twilight gloom,
The chanting stream, the clustering bloom,
Haunt my mind ever;
And you, embowered amidst the green,
A loveliness, a joy serene,
Shall perish never. (1887)

Heyday

I HAVE a pain, and, faith, I know
No doctor ere can cure it;
And if he could, 'twere little good,
I'd rather far endure it!
Although a misanthrope I seem
Of sense and mirth forsaken;
Although I in the day-time dream,
And in the night keep waken.

Chorus:

Heyday, for wisdom's way!
Hey ho, for prudent poses O!
But Love's the dower to bring the flower
To Lassies' cheeks, the roses, O!

Two lovely eyes upon my heart
  Have shed their twilight splendour;
And now, I dare avow the part
  Has grown exceeding tender.
But what of that? If we have eyes
  'Twas meant that we should use them;
If we have hearts, 'tis no surprise
  That we at times should lose them!

A plague on party politics,
  They sour our nobler feelings:
A plague on trade, a pack of tricks,
  And vile, dishonest dealings.
Let us have life—it soon will pass—
  And seize on all its chances;
The best of all, a bonnie lass
  With sweet, bewitching glances! (1881)

A Parting of the Ways

"WHAT land is this, what vision of strange meaning?
What palace steps are these whereon I stand?
Tell me, sweet lady, am I wake or dreaming?—
I feel and know the touch of thy fair hand.

Nay but,—what forms are these that crouch together,
Outside the door, amidst the blast and snow?
Wherefore abide they out in such wild weather?—
Dear Christ! they shiver and are weeping so!"

"Nay, heed them not, good sir, the feast is waiting,"
She said, and looked at me with calm, sweet eyes:
And in my heart, two pleas of love debating,
The palace vanished: morning filled the skies.

The Skylark

AERIAL minstrel! deep in the blue sky
Flooding the air with rivulets of song!
Heavenward thy flight, and yet thou dost belong
To the brown earth: I drink thy liquid joy!

Yea, thou, a little, tiny thing dost give
Thy rapture glorious liberty, while I,
Who too am full of gladness, vainly try
To hymn the joy I feel this morn to live.

Thy song ascends! Up, up, with thee I go,
Up, buoyed upon thy wings of melody:
Nearer the sun—nearer thy goal of glee—
The senses' yoke no more I seem to know.

Baffled!—thy rapture can no further soar,
Now gradually droop thy wings and note;
Together down the steep emprise we float,
Together, back to earth, we sink once more.

The Miracle of Morn

O NEVER lessening miracle of morn!
What wondrous spell of radiance outflows
From thee as from a fountain in the sky,
Moving majestically and garlanding
With brightest hues the Sun's transcendent way.
O wondrous efflorescence of the dawn!
That brings forth all the wizardry of light,
Changing as by an enchanter's magic stroke
Night into day, dark into light, and void
Into an infinitude of being:—
Forth from the void and darkness lifting up
The living world in all its loveliness
Of form—the hills and forests, vales and glowing fields,
The streams, the changing clouds, the shining sea,
And all the marvellous train of living things,
The creatures of the wild in endless shapes.

Forth from the mountains the first whisper comes;
And sudden and unseen the darkness stirs,
Instinctive, as an army bent on flight,
Striking its tents in silence, crowding down
Into the vales, and hiding swift away
In every hollow, nook and lurking place.
And then ere yet the eye has time to scan
A great transfiguration in the East!

The Oracles of Night

O WONDERFUL is Night when the moon pours
Her horn of radiance on the earth, each hill
And vale, and wood, and pool transfiguring
With mystic beauty! All is silent save
The air whispering among the hidden leaves,
And the faint scintillations of the stars.
With what soft steps, what loveliness of mien
Thou walk'st the valleys when the sun is gone!
Thy ambient robes wide shadowing o'er the fields,
Ingathering, sweet Shepherdess of Sleep,
The flocks of men, and beasts into their folds,
Leaving the earth to stillness undisturbed!

Then comes into the heart a strange new joy,
A glow as if of welcoming within
Some angel-influence from another life;
And the soul, warmed and energised, looks forth
With bold emprise into the mysteries
Of the Unseen.

O wonderful it is
To gaze into the deep, dilating blue,
And pierce the vistas of Infinitude!
And wonderful the strange imaginings
That come upon us! Then do we begin
To doubt all our philosophies, and feel
The infirmity of all our reasonings.

And our conceits—so valiant in debate—
Shrink back on us, affrighted little things!
Then comes the tidal surge of faith and doubt—
Now a deep sense of power omnipotent
Floods through the soul, uplifted and aglow,
Submerging all our scepticism :—now
The sapping ebb—the chill reflow of doubt
Circling like serpent coils upon the heart :
And we fall backward, mute, dismayed, forlorn,
Appalled at the significance of things—
The vast vagary of the Universe!

It is not thus when on a summer day
We stand in 'wildering sunshine; when the sky,
Opaque with iridescence, intercepts
Our too adventurous sight, and curtains out
Our atom's part in space; when all the hills
And vales and woods, and ever-flowing waters
Seem animate with one sufficing joy;
And myriad hues of light, and myriad sounds
Transfuse the soul with ecstasy, and blend
Our being in the common life of earth,
Its harmony and rapture of existence.
Night speaks not so. Betimes the very air
Seems but the moving of the Invisible;
And every shade the haunt of mystic powers,
And every star a far intelligence
From which might come at any instant forth
A voice ineffable—an utterance
Of Wisdom's self wherein all that we know
Were soluble as match-light in the noon.

Yea, I have loved and joyed in thee, O Night!
I am enamoured of thee, and have sought
Thee far on the lone hills, where I have lain
Upon thy lap, and thy sweet whisperings
Have flowed into my being. O ever may
My soul seek refuge in thy breast and gain
Renewal of its sight in the strong peace,
The splendour and the mystery of thine eyes!

* * * * * *

'Twas in the joy of thy companionship
That oft-times in my youthful questionings
I strayed alone among the silent hills
And hidden glens, to meditate on themes
That racked my thought-sick brain without respite;
While Doubt lurked as a devil in my soul,
And Reason's light was as the flame of hell.
Until, at last, worn almost to a spectral thing,
I gave my soul to Reason, fearing still
Lest I had sinned the sin of sins, for ever
Closing upon myself the Kingdom's gates,—
Yet in my torment crying out to God
If He were merciful to mercy show;
If truth were His no blame wer't truth to seek;
Wherefore no longer should I strive to bear
The fetters Priestcraft fashioned for mankind.

* * * * * *

Calmly the Moon looked down, when on the brink
High o'er the tide at midnight I cast forth
The Book of Faith into the dull, flat sea:

And as I watched it sink, a leaden thing,
Beneath the wreathing circlets of the splash
That fled from it, full reverently her beams
Sealed o'er the spot. And I looked up and lo!
The Moon shone as a face compassionate,
And I, renewed in strength, in hope, in joy,
Cried forth: "Fairest of Night's fair sisterhood!
Bear witness to my soul it shall be free!—
Free as the spirit of the winds that sweep
Across the mountain tops and rake the plains
Bearing the clouds exultant in their might.
No thought shall be too high for me, or low;
No creed too sacred, doctrine too profane,
Which to explore in search of truth.
Too long, too long, have I been thralled in doubt,
Entombed in mysteries. There is no greater hell
Than doubt and fear: no greater joy than freedom,
Fearless, and daring all things to inquire
Trustfully as a child, fearing no ill.
Yea, henceforth I am free! And I shall joy
To roam upon the towering peaks of thought
And stand upon its precipices wild,
Which I have shuddered but to think upon."
Thus rashly made I unto thee, O night,
My youthful vow with youthful arrogance:
Vain boast of Reason's sovereignty, of thought
Free as a bird in heaven with wings full spread!

* * * * * *

Not years, nor months had gone, when wearily,
One evening, after many absorbed hours,
I laid my book upon the shelf, distraught.

" There is no sleep to-night," I said, and went
Towards the window, and looked out upon
The drowsied world.

And the Night beckoned me.
So I went forth. The village was asleep.
Quietly I threaded up the grassy streets
Under the shadow of the cottages,
And soon was in the upper fields. It was
An hour of utmost beauty : the full moon
Illumed the world like an enchanted hall.
High circling hills with distant peaks of snow
Looked o'er the vale, enswathed in misty sheen,
And all was silent, save a murmurous hush
As if the spheres held converse. Glad was I
To feel myself alone upon the earth,
The shadow of the mountains at my feet;
And feel the cool, soft air upon my brow,
Sweet-smelling of the pine and heather-bloom,
Wet with the dew. Gladly I pressed me on
Whither—I heeded not, save mountainwards.

Then rose the mighty slopes, that drew my steps
Through dewy bracken and thick rushes green;
Leaping o'er wakeful streams, and scaling rocks,
I panted up through vaguely luminous glens,
And, underneath the shadows of gaunt cliffs,
I paused betimes to breathe and scan the scene
That as by magic rose beneath my gaze.

At length upon a pinnacle I stood,
High up, half-lifted into the night's noon,
O'erlooking half the world, vales, shining lakes
And wondrous mountain ranges spreading far.
I stood, quick-breathing, all my veins aglow
Despite the wintry lancing of the air.

Long, held as in a trance, I gazed around—
Thoughts countless, wordless, crowding on my brain—
Until there grew within a wild desire
To challenge Nature's self, to know if, here
Among these ancient hills the truth of Life,
The mystery of the Universe, was known.

Then looking o'er the brooding hills whose brows
Had borne the countless seasons of the sun,
And in whose granite frames were written deep
The story of creation, unimpaired,
I threw abroad the up-cry of my soul :—
" Is there a God ? "

Startled from sleep, the rocks
Listened, half-doubting the incredible words.
" Is there a God ? "

Then far across the vales
The words came echoing back from hill to hill—
" A God ? A God ? A God ? " As though a host
Of demons hidden in their caverns mocked
The blasphemy. " God ? " and gleefully
Enjoyed their faithless import. Then the sound
Faded into the silence of the night.

Yet seemed it that the mountains held their breath,
Long listening for some reassuring sign,
Crouching together fearfully.

Trembling
As one guilty of some vast sacrilege—
Yet guiltless, too—silent, long time, I stood.
Then towards the host of Night I raised my eyes,
And once again invoked their sympathy.

" Ye everlasting stars ! speak to my soul !
Ye orbs that plenish the eternal deep,
From the cold, soulless earth I turn to ye !
Be not ye silent also. Speak to me.
Answer, have *ye* not heard His voice, or seen
Some shadow of His presence midst your spheres ?
Has no word passed, no whisper, no least sign
Of Him whose being makes all things to be ?
Have ye not felt His spirit like the morn
Go forth in glory o'er the sunlit Heaven ?

Wherefore with acclamation cry aloud,
' Yea, God is here, we have beheld His face.'
Mutely ye listen : Answerless, ye stare !
Why look ye all so suddenly obtused,
Things reft of thought, inanimate, blind, dumb,
Hard gleaming crystals, bedded in the rock ?
Alas, ye do but mock my agony."

How cold, how silent is the Universe!
It is a dead thing wholly. Hapless man!—
If thou wouldst seek to know "Is there a God?"
Ask not the Universe. It has no soul,
No knowledge, no intelligence, no love:
Its shuddering depths but echo back thy voice.

A Fragment: May, 1920

YEARS pass. Amidst the stoutest stress of men
My days were spent, hard wrestling with the woes
Of centuries—the fruit of ignorance,
Of weak and brutal sloth, enslaved by greed,
Religion, poetry, art, almost forgot—
No dreams or fancies save of man redeemed
From man's oppression—and the Golden Age
When man at last shall reign o'er his own earth,
Finding his fullest weal in Commonweal.

* * * * * *

From no light-bearer have I turned away
Whate'er the hue or volume of his beam.
Science and Reason still in their domain
Hold o'er my mind their old accustomed sway.
No knowledge comes unwelcomed to my door,
No doctrine, new or old, stands out, denied,
But hospitably each is entertained
At my mind's board, with glass and pipe and song.

Yet am I changed. A new and larger sight
Has gradually grown within my mind,
A new expanse of sense of things unknown,
Of progress leading to the infinite.
And more and more, as searching out the things
Unsearchable, my thoughts turn inward, where
The Universe reveals its mysteries
Of Love Triumphant and Eternal Life.

* * * * * *

I know, I know the argument :—I know,
Oh, co-disciple, where I stumble whilst
Thou, in thy manhood's strength, keep'st Reason's road.
But I am changed—Wherefore?—I cannot tell,
Except in words that bid the mockers mock,
Like children's gestures, or Galileo's plan
Of heliocentric heaven, or the charts
Columbus spread before his mariners—
Or him who by the shores of Galilee
Was from the darkness of the womb redeemed,
Whose only answer to the sceptics was
" Whereas that I was blind, now do I see."

Transfiguration

I.

HE sought for God, and fled the multitude
Afar amidst the mountains lone and dread;
Eagerly, by an inward beckoning led,
On a high peak at night he marvelling stood;
And as a while the glistening spheres he viewed—
The starr'd expanse above; below outspread
The sleeping hills with mystic hues o'ershed—
He felt the world's mysterious brotherhood.
Then suddenly a splendour o'er him fell
And lo, there stood a being fairer far
Than aught that raptured poet's tongue can name:
As illumed ivory, or translucent shell,
She shone, her radiance veiling moon and star,
Her wings fresh dripping with the morning's flame.

II.

O never hath the silvery air of night
Been strained with sweeter sound; nor 'neath the moon
Has mortal gained of God a godlier boon
Than when down bending in her radiant might
Her whispering fell as from the infinite
Upon his ear: And even as in a swoon
Of melody the lark sings in the noon,
So sank his soul enfolded in her light.
Anon he wakened, and lo, shining clear
He saw through curtaining mists the morning throw
Its golden-shafted spears across the skies;
And a great litany pulsed in his ear,
And a new chrism burned upon his brow,
And Man's redemption glowed before his eyes.

To the Evening Star

DIDST thou come tip-toe o'er the hill, sweet Star,
To hang thy lamp a beacon o'er the sea?—
So sudden is thy marvel in the sky!
How tranquilly thou sittest there alone—
Fairest of all the sisterhood of heaven!—
Looking down on us in our little world
With sweet solicitude. What tenderness
Is in thine eye, half-wistful in its gaze,
Even as a maiden's waiting at the gate.
Surely in thee has God enbeamed that love,
Whose such intensity glows into flame,
Wherefrom man's soul has caught the spark divine
Of his ideal. Yea, all loveliness
In thee seems immanent—all excellence
That lifts the soul's dominion from the ground.

Celestia! Never surely hast thou shone
With such rare exhalation; else have I
Never before had eyes so cleansed to see
The vesture of thy beauty in the night!
How all the earth is marvelling in thy beam,
So eloquent, like music of the viol.
What sweet beatitude indwells in thee,
That draws from the gross bulk of things our thoughts,
Obtuse and blasé, to renew our sense
Of the sublimity of little things:—
The glistening shell upon the stretching shore;
The ripple lingering on the pebble's brow;
The feet half-peeping from the children's cot;

The speedwell glinting in the dusky hedge;
The red-breast in the thorn; the wide-eyed hare
Nibbling beneath the fern—the thousand things
That lisp for us the syllables of life!

Thou mightest be the genius of that ideal
Of spiritual love and purity, which we,
Have ever in our soul's deep glades beheld
Pass in the perfect form of womanhood.
Surely thou hast been sent, Sweet Hesperus,
To linger o'er the earth when toil is done,
To cheer the weary and despondent heart,
*And by thy pure, inspiring loveliness
*To win our souls to higher paths of life.

Thou speak'st or seem'st to speak to me, Sweet Star!
And gladly would my soul, beholding thee,
(Like one in contemplation of the Sign)
Pour forth its ecstacy in litanies:
Yea, who could gaze on thee, so pure, so sweet,
So passing beautiful, and in him feel
No rapture, no out-cry of soul, to win
The benediction of thy heavenly beam!

* The lines marked with a star in the margin were penned by Bruce Glasier just before his spirit passed into new life. As he laid down his pen he entered into his "glad surprise," breathing his last at 12 noon, June 4, 1920.

In England Now

(Written during the "In Darkest England" agitation, about 1883, after visiting a workshop into which the sunlight never entered except in midsummer.)

MOST blessed sunshine! hardly dare
My dazzled sight a welcome bear
To thy sweet flood;
Yet though my eyes are thus denied,
My heart to thee is open wide
In gratitude,

In joy and praise that thou hast made
O'er dismal roofs and gables' shade
This visit sweet;
And all so bounteously dost pour
Out of thy heart this golden store
Here at our feet!

In joy and praise, to greet thee here
Amidst this noisome atmosphere
And dreary din;
Amidst the pallid creatures bent,
From morn to night, toiling intent
To keep life in.

Those ghostly faces hardly lit
With life, those livid looks that flit
From wheel to wheel;
Those fingers moving quick beneath
The heavy cylinders and teeth
Of gleaming steel!

Most radiant guest! hadst thou a thought
Of finding human creatures caught
In bondage thus?
Couldst thou conceive in God's fair plan
Of life, that man should make for man
This Tartarus?

Outside, upon the street and wall,
I watch thy radiance brightly fall,
Casting quaint shadows;
And wistfully I think upon
The cool shade by the elm trees thrown
Upon the meadows.

'Tis summer now; somewhere, I know,
The fields and streamlet edges glow
With leaf and flower;
But here, no summer thou dost bring—
No May, no June—no garlanding
Of bank and bower.

Most blessed and most radiant flood!
Thou bringest me *here* a multitude
Of thoughts most sad:
Gone now is all the phantasy
Of glorious promise which to me
Thy beams once had.

Untasted that sweet hope of love,
Of raptured tryst in dell and grove,
By lake and stream;
While yet the heart was young, and life
Held still undimmed by sordid strife
Its joy and dream.

All unachieved, all quite denied,
The dreams of travel far and wide,
In wondrous lands.
The hopes of fame, to win a place
With the high heroes of our race,
Where Sidney stands.

The chimes that from the steeple fall,
That one time were a merry call
From the thorpe tower,
Now toll out harshly as the sound
Of jailor, jangling on his round,
Each dreary hour.

I watch the busy street below,
Its pageantry of life, its flow
Of rich and poor;
And the grim meaning of the scene
No gorgeous sophistry can screen,
No vaunt obscure.

Surely there lurks a loathsome lie
Beneath all our philosophy;
Or some fell blight
Has fallen on the leaf of life,
Turning to bitterness and strife
Love and delight!

Sweet sunshine, lo! thou'rt gone!—thy stream
Contracting to a slender gleam
Has fled our wall,
Where, only when thy orb runs high
In June, canst thou an ingress spy
'Twixt gables tall.

Yea, only a few days each year
Canst thou peep in upon us here,
Where death is rife;
Thou whose unceasing flood regales
Our England's thousand glowing vales
With joy and life.

O England, England, once thy name
To me was as the golden flame
That fills the noon;
Thy heart aglow for liberty
As glowing land and shining sea
In joyous June.

Great seemed thy might, and great thy care,
Thy men brave and thy women fair,
Who bred no slaves:
Thy soul that could not thraldom brook,
Thy ships that seized the rats and shook
Them from the waves.

Hast thou for us no arm to wield?
For us no shining sword and shield,
O England great?
Hast thou no might for us oppressed?—
For us the children of thy breast
Inviolate?

O England, is thy prophecy
Of glorious times to come when we
Toil not, nor crave?
Sunshine, art thou for us a sign
Of Gates of Life that only shine
Beyond the grave?

Jesus of Nazareth

O NAZAREAN CHRIST! whose life appears
To us, far glistening through the night of years,
As light of planet beaming o'er the sea;
Wayfaring Son of God! from whose lips flowed,
By desert-sides and unfrequented road,
A fountain spring of pure democracy:
O blessed folk, who clustered round thy feet
Drinking with thirsty ears thy words most sweet!

Thou wert the agitator of thy day,
Assailing wrongs that had grown fat and grey
Down centuries of ignorance and fear;
Oppression that devoured in law's disguise;
Rulers that, drunk with flattery and lies,
The wailings of the people would not hear:
Thou didst rebuke the rich man at his feast
And bared the blasphemy of scribe and priest.

And art thou he whose temples stud the earth,
Like stars in heaven when no moon is forth?
Art thou the Christ to whom the nations bow?
Whose praises all the congregations sing,
Peer, politician, usurer, priest and king?
Do those who cursed of old adore thee now?
Art thou so changed, O Christ?—so changed are they
As darkness into light, night into day?

They call thee God, and worship thee with words,
And ceremonies, and persecuting swords,
  And outward pomp—but in their hearts, not they!
They praise thee with their lips, whom their hearts spurn,
And daily unto Mammon incense burn;
  And ceaseless rob, and lie and cheat and slay:
They mouth thy precepts while their thoughts devise
Misdeeds that mar the earth and mock the skies.

O Christ! thy spirit does not dwell in these—
The modern scribes and priests and pharisees,
  The usurers that crowd the market place—
Who would to Pilate drag thee quick wert thou
Again within their grip, and bind thy brow
  With triple thorns, and spit upon thy face;
And crying "Lawbreaker" and "Communist"
Scoff, scourge, and crucify again the Christ.

No, not with these does thy pure spirit bide,
Who every morn and noon and eventide
  Perpetuate the parable of Dives;
Who build thee temples and with oil and spice
Perfume thy altars, yet deny thee thrice
  Every hour of their cold, selfish lives.
Who rob the poor, and when they ask for bread
In thy name, give them prison stones instead.

Not with proud bishops robed in silk and lawn,
Not with sleek pastors who on fortune fawn,
  Gossiping in the squire's drawing-room;
Who dexterously their ministry apply,
To pass the camel through "the needle's eye,"
  And bring Heaven's chariot to the rich man's tomb:
Who hurrying on the road of wealth and pride
Pass the afflicted on the other side.

No, not with these is found thy spirit, Christ!
But rather, as of old, with the despised,
  The poor, the oppressed, the friendless and the rude;
Those whom the goodly folk of great estate
Would suffer not to pass inside their gate—
  The weary, heavy-laden multitude;
Yea, rather with the poor outcast betrayed,
Than proud-lipped lady gorgeously arrayed.

With those who would a fairer temple raise
To thee of gratitude and love and praise,
  Than ever yet has been beneath the skies;
By building up of human happiness,
By universal justice and redress—
  Wiping the tears so from grief-laden eyes—
By scourging wrathfully, even as thou didst,
The thieves and moneymongers from our midst.

With those whose hearts for human weal beat warm
Amidst the biting frost and blinding storm
  Of calumny, indifference and rebuke;
Who with high purpose boldly walk elate
Thro' persecuting fires of Church and State;
  Who steadfast in the face of tyrants look:
Who meekly brave the fury of the crowd,
Battered and bleeding, but with hearts unbowed.

With these, O Christ, art thou! with these we claim
Thy martyrdom, thy precepts and thy name,
  Thy healing hand, thy blessing, thy redress.
Ours is thy resurrection and thy reign,
Thy Kingdom spreading wide from main to main,
  Thy peace, thy fellowship, thy gentleness.
From thrones, dominions, priesthoods and all powers,
We claim thee—we unbind thee—Christ is ours!

—1886.

(Michael Davitt was prevented, on his release from penal servitude, from addressing a public meeting at Oldham in 1883 by the Fenians, who howled him down and threatened him with revolvers. The "reason" for this hostility was his avowal in favour of constitutional rather than insurrectionary agitation.)

THEY cannot bring his noble soul to bay;
They cannot chain his fearless spirit down:
But they can hiss at him, and yell like fiends, and drown
In ghoulish clamour what his speech would say:
Ay, they can league them with the tyrants, they
Can join their country's enemies, and wage
A war of ignorant and recreant rage
Against the truest heart they have to-day.
Is Ireland free? Have they nought else to do
But play themselves like fools and cowards so?
Their chivalry and patriotism, too,
Are cast aside like rags, to strike a blow—
At what—at England? No! but at the man,
The best of Ireland's sons, the first in Freedom's van.

To E. U.

(With a copy of Burns's songs.)

LIFT up the auld Scotch fiddle-bow!—
Lay down your Browning and Rossetti:
How blithely does it stir the heart,
And touch the inmost part,
Ettie.

The modern Muse, what joy has she,
Wi' puffy pierrots and confetti?
The barefoot Muse o' Kyle for me,
High-kilted to the knee,
Ettie!

And you, I vow, by your bright e'en,
Your Laxey* gown and hair sae jetty,
Hae held a licht at Halloween,
And link't it on the green,
Ettie!

When swung the auld Scotch fiddle-bow,
Among the Highland reels, Ettie,—
The lads a'loupin' like a lowe,
The lasses live as eels,
Ettie!

* Laxey, Isle of Man, where Ruskin homespuns are woven by water power.

She Comes in Silken Winds

SHE comes in silken winds that blow
From banks of odorous flowers;
She weaves bright visions from the glow
Of blithesome noonday hours;
By shady stream and sunny sea
She gathers sweetest minstrelsy.

Away down in the month of June
When a bright shower has fled,
Unseen she lies in happy swoon
Upon a flowery bed;
And lo! her long hair in the grass
Entangles my feet as I pass.

Maybe on some far rocky isle
Which mariners may not find,
I dwell with her in pearly caves
Midmost the waves and wind—
The white spray breaking in my face
She clasps me in her glad embrace.

When in some wood awandering
Perchance where she abides!
Sudden! the lark begins to sing
And from her cell she glides,
And, as a Vestal, 'mid the trees,
Bends my soul to her mysteries.

Oft when the stars their fair lamps trim,
And I lay down my book,
To wander by the hedgerows dim,
On the young moon to look :
A radiance on the way I see—
And lo ! she brightly walks with me.

Ah ! witless me ! could I enthral
Her in some mystic spell—
There is no name that I may call
Her nigh o'er hill and dell;
But ever on my soul there lies
The glad dominion of her eyes.

A May Morn Invitation

O RISE, my bonny lass,
See, the morning sun !
Throw off the drowsy sheets,
And put your kirtle on.
Your bed may be cosy,
And your eyes full of dreams;
But there's glory on the mountains,
And joy in the streams.

And whither are we going?
And wherefore do we go?—
To meet the summer coming
O'er the mountains O!
While the lark is in its nest,
And dull folks are asleep,
And the mists from the valleys
Do drowsily creep.

Let the lazy lie abed
Till the noon is high,
Let the timid mope afire
Till their veins grow dry;
But we'll be to the mountains
Where the clouds are all aglow,
And welcome in the summer
This May morning O. (1893)

The Wine and Jest

THE wine and jest are going round—
I do not hear or see:
Tho' may be I am sitting here,
My soul it sits by thee:
I drink a glass
To thee, sweet lass,
That hast transfigured me.

My blessing on thy bosom fair
That throbbed its pain on mine;
My blessing on thy quivering lips
That sealed my fate with thine:
I drink a glass
To thee, sweet lass,
May every joy be thine.

My blessing on the hallowed night
I held thee at the door;
My blessing on thy trembling hand
That thrilled me to the core:
I drink a glass
To thee, sweet lass,
My heart is flowing o'er. (1898)

Love's Conjuration

LOVE fills my heart with song,
As the summer winds atune
A birchen dell—the winds
From the hillside on the noon
Of a sunny day in June.

My thoughts flow as a stream
That sparkles to the sea;
Through many wondrous ways
Wandering tunefully—
Full fresh and sweet to thee.

My soul is as the star
  Of twilight in the west;
In thine eyes azure deep
  It dwells in sweetest rest,
  Where all its beams are blest.

My life is as the day,
  And thou—thou art its sun;
But there would be no day
  If the glad sun were gone,
All would be dark, my own. (1893)

To My Betrothed—May, 1893

WE'RE going to the front, no! we will not lag behind
  The army of the peoples o'er the sea;
Where their swords salute the sun, where their war-cry clasps the wind,
In their victory or defeat we must be.

If one man has to die, be that *one* man *you and I*—
  Whoso seeks to live is murderer of his mate;
But if as one we dare either life or death to share,
  We shall march, a host of fire, thro' Freedom's gate.

The earth shall break in twain ere they sunder us again,
  Our Cause the world shall girdle like the sun:
And the harvest of our words we will sickle with our swords
  Ere Oppression shall undo what Love has done.

By Windermere

(June, 1893.)

THE sun's warm glow is on the lake
Whose blue limbs throb and glisten,
Her murmurous protestations break
Upon the pebbles, listen!

The winds are wooing in the woods,
The flowers are all in rapture;
Many a blush beneath their hoods,
And many a bride to capture!

And you, my bonny bride, my joy!—
A joy that has no fleeting,—
Your eyes are marvelling on your boy—
And how his heart is beating!

Adieu

MUST I those fetters fair unloose,
And quit my neck of their sweet yoke?
And must I those fond lips refuse
To longer seal the vow they spoke?
Proud as an emperor would I stay
A prisoner in thy embrace;
Yet must I tear myself away,
An exile from my darling's face!

How brightly glows the world above,
  How gently breathes the earth below;
A fairer night ne'er hallowed love,
  Yet from thy bosom I must go.
O why such haste, O shining moon,
  To climb the spangled sky to-night?—
O midnight hour, why thus so soon
  Spread thy cold wings on our delight?

Soft, soft as o'er the dewy flowers
  The night wind sweeps its airy train,
May o'er thee glide the lightsome hours,
  Till I return to thee again.
While dark and drear, as were the night
  Did moon and stars forsake the skies,
My heart shall be—robbed of the light,
  The dewy radiance of thine eyes.

Yet must I truly say, farewell,
  And bid my own sweet love adieu—
Of our twain joy pronounce the knell,
  And sever so our breasts in two?
Were we not brave enough to part,
  How little worth were it to bide;
O, I'll bring back a truer heart,
  And worthier arms for thee, my bride!

(Barrow, 1898.)

To Katharine

"A GUID new year," to my dear lass,
The same to my sweet wife;
Another to my comrade, who
Has pledged me life for life.

Three hearts, from which had I to choose,
My peace were all undone;
Could I not tell this miracle
That they are three in one!

A fairest trinity, to whom
I purest worship give;
Within the skies of her blue eyes
A heaven is where I live.

But nine new moons have known our love
And six have seen us wed;
With joyous sight, the threshold white
Of this new year we tread.

"A guid new year"—yea, till the toil
Of our great hope is done,
May I renew this wish with you,
And we be two in one!

(January 1, 1894)

The Wizardry of Love

SEE now the fields are white with snow—
A changed and ghostly scene!
On bank and bower the snowflakes blow
Where all was gold and green.

Twixt night and morn, as sound we slept,
  The fields and hills have flown !—
The winter suddenly has crept
  Down from the Arctic zone !

Our leafy dwelling in the wood
  Has vanished as a cloud !
The brook which sang our every mood
  Lies silent in a shroud.

But though without be bleak and cold,
  And a changed world we see :
A summer in my heart I hold
  Of constant joy for thee.

Wherein for thee are woods and flowers,
  And song of birds and streams,
And troupes of golden-winged hours,
  And sleep and radiant dreams.

A loveliness that shall not fade,
  A summer that shall last,
Where thou canst dwell in sheen or shade,
  Untouched by frost or blast.

And where as colder grow the nights,
  The hearth shall warmer glow :
And thou the seasons' twain delights
  In two-fold joyance know.

Epithalamium

THE fairest summer of the years
Awoke my love at dawn,
And kissed her eyes, whereon the spears
Of the Valkyries shone.

And summer took her by the hand
And led her unto me;
And all the joys of sea and land
Bore her bridal company.

And never were the flowers more gay
Never the fields more green;
Nor sang the lark a sweeter lay
Out of the noontide sheen.

She came as sunlight through a wood,
As soft winds down a hill;
Her touch made all things sweet and good
That ever had seemed ill.

The olden days of love and song,
The happier days to be,
All seemed to gather in a throng
Of golden augury.

Love's kingdom dazzling in my sight,
I trembled now to grasp—
It seemed as though the very light
Bent living in my clasp.

And never was more dearly loved
A maid unto a wife,
Nor ever wife more sweetly proved
Love is the throne of life.

(June 21, 1894)

To My War-Maiden Wife

I CRAVED of Freedom's hand a sword,
In lifelong fight to bear;
And freedom held me to my word—
"Take ye this weapon fair,
And in thy heart as by thy side its glory shalt thou wear."

A glad form flashed from out the sun
Bright breathing by my side:—
"Take thou the gift thy prayer has won,
Thy sword shall be thy bride.
A prophecy that shall be told wide as the world is wide."

And now for vengeance unto wrong
And victory to right!
For here, at last, is man made strong
With more than human might,
To do what God has left undone—sunder the dark from light.

(January 23, 1895)

Dark Night and Lonely Road

DARK night and lonely road,
Chill winds from unknown hills :
And yet we tread
In hope and dread
Where faith her quest fulfils.

Hard boulders at our feet
And tangled furze and heath,
And drear sounds creep
Up the gorge deep,
Hushing the words we breathe.

Keep close to me, my love;
Thy touch doth make me strong :—
Sweet maid, sweet wife,
Whose life gives life—
The morn will break ere long.

Spring in Rivington

THE sun has doffed his winter's hood,
His locks are all ablaze;
The hills, shy of his merry mood,
Shrink deep in luminous haze.

So fierce his gleam upon the lake,
  It spears my sight : so warm
The sky, that I unwrap and take
  My cloak upon my arm.

Yet speeds the wind from the North's bow,
  And switches through the trees;
While still the clutches of the snow
  On hidden corners seize.

And it is Spring ! but yesterday
  We heard gruff Winter's roar;
We piled the fire and bolted tight
  The windows and the door.

And now ere yet the tyrant's tread
  Has died in hill and wood,
The sweet young voice of Spring has sped
  The joy of bird and bud.

See, too, the Coltsfoot's yellow head,
  He wears no shirt or shoon—
He's popping naked from his bed
  Thinking that it is June !

There is a gladness in the light,
  A whispering in the air;
A hope, a promise, a delight,
  Pulsating everywhere.

Even the hard earth seems to hail
  Our steps with jocund clap;
And bids us bound o'er hill and dale
  Blithe as a boy mad-cap.

O Spring, what mystery of joy
  Betokens this, that seems
To cleanse the soul of stain and cloy
  And freshen all its streams?

Fain would my spirit cry aloud
  The joy it feels to be
With field and wood and lake and cloud
  In this festivity.

If but my love were with me now,
  My breast on hers I'd fling;
And pray all living things may know
  The blessing of the Spring. (1894)

On the Road to Liberty

"We all belong to the glorious band of strolling players of whom Shakespeare is the chief."—Sir J. E. MILLAIS at the Savage Club dinner.

And WE all belong to the glorious band of rebels and outlaws who, with sword and song, have preserved the right-of-way to Freedom.

WE'VE come o'er many a mountain,
We've forded many a stream;
We've wandered thro' the night-time
And 'neath the noonday gleam:
But whether over hill or dale,
Or over stream or sea,
Our hearts are aye a-roving
On the road to liberty.

CHORUS:
A-roving on the road,
A-roving on the road—
On the road to liberty.

We bear good script upon our belts,
And fiddles in our hands;
And with goodwill and minstrelsy
Bring freedom to all lands.
To our blithe tunes the women lilt
The bairnies on their knee;
The old men cry, "Heaven bless you!"
On the road to liberty.

We eat when we are hungry,
We drink when we are dry;
We rest when we are weary,
We live before we die!

We kiss the lassies when they're dole,
  And fain with us they be,
Oh, there's life and love a-roving
    On the road to liberty!

There's a castle on yon hill;
  We'll look in upon the way,
And bid ourselves be welcome,
  And the gentle-folks "Good-day."
We'll make the ancient halls resound
  With festive mirth and song;
Oh, we bear no beggars' wallets
  As we merrily march along.

There's a big cask in the vaults,
  Where the country's juice is stored,
And none may touch the liquor
  Save the rich man and the lord.
But we'll tap its great round belly
  And let the liquor flow:
And we'll make a bonfire of the staves
  As we merrily, merrily go. (1887)

We'll Turn Things Upside Down

(Tune: "A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea.")

OH, the world is overburdened
    With the idle and the rich!
  They bask up in the sunshine
  While we plod in the ditch;
But zounds! we'll put some mettle
  In their fingers and their thumbs,
When we turn things upside down, my lads,
  And the Revolution comes!

Oh, we'll turn things upside down,
Oh, we'll turn things upside down,
They will wonder what has happened
When we turn things upside down!

Plain living may be wholesome,
And wondrous virtues may
Abound beneath ribs scant of flesh
And pockets scant of pay.
It may be poverty is best
If rightly understood;
But we'll turn things upside down, my lads!
We don't want all the good!

Oh, we'll turn, etc.,
Oh, we'll turn, etc.,
May they thrive on their philosophy,
When we turn things upside down.

They're never done extolling
The nobility of work;
But, the knaves! they always take good care
Their share of toil to shirk.
Do they send their sons and daughters
To the workshop or the mill?
Oh, we'll turn things upside down, my lads,
It will change their tune, it will!

Oh, we'll turn, etc.,
Oh, we'll turn, etc.,
They can practice all their precepts
When we turn things upside down! (1891)

When The Revolution Comes

COME, every honest lad and lass!
Too long we've been kept under
By rusty chains of fraud and fear—
We'll snap them all asunder!

When the Revolution comes,
When the Revolution comes,
It's coming fast—our turn, at last!
The Social Revolution!

A thunderstorm of Freedom shall
Go forth among the people;
Our flag shall flourish o'er the land
On every stalk and steeple!

When, etc.

The knave who lives in idleness
By plundering his neighbour,
Shall learn to use the pick and spade,
And live by honest labour!

When, etc.

The landlord and capitalist—
If you should wish to see 'em,
You'll have to take a holiday
And search in the museum!

When, etc.

For such as contrite editors,
And penitent policemen,
We'll find nice sinecures, and say :
Go live and die in peace, men.

When, etc.

Then let us hail the coming day !
The glorious hope before us !
And with brave deeds anticipate
The good time of our chorus !

When the Revolution comes,
When the Revolution comes,
Then three cheers give, of " Long, long live
The Social Revolution ! " (1888)

Marching on to Liberty

(Tune : " Marching Through Georgia.")

WE'RE marching on to liberty, we're marching to the time
Of universal brotherhood and peace in every clime ;
We're marching to the triumph of our principles sublime—
Carrying the red flag to victory.

CHORUS :

Hurrah ! hurrah ! in Freedom's van are we;
Hurrah ! hurrah ! we march to liberty,
To the cities of the Commune, and the glorious time to be,
Carrying the red flag to victory.

We are the mob, the working class, the Proletariat;
Pinched and poor are we, while they, the knaves ! are rich and fat;
But wait, the day is coming, boys ! we mean to change all that;
For we are marching to liberty.

They're blocking up the highways; yes they think to keep us back;
By piling barriers of law and falsehood on the track;
We'll break the barriers down and burn them into cinders black,
As we go marching to liberty.

What though they make each fingerpost a gibbet—shall we quail?
Or turn each ancient hostelry into a county jail—
Or break the bridges down our fathers built for our avail—
We'll still keep marching to liberty.

We'll drive the robbers from our lands, our meadows, and our hills,
We'll drive them from our warehouses, our workshops, and our mills;
We'll wish them merry on their bonds, their bankbooks and their bills!
As we go marching to liberty.

Then on to revolution, boys! We'll cleave a highway broad
Where fell the fearless pioneers, as freedomwards they trod;
And though we fall as they fell—millions follow on the road,
To carry the red flag to victory. (1889)

Ballad of Law and Order

(Tune : " Vicar of Bray.")

SINCE all our institutions are
In danger at this moment
From notions which those Socialists
Their utmost do to foment;
Against all their vile principles,
Which truly most abhorred are,
Let every patriot invoke
The power of Law and Order.

CHORUS :

Against all their vile principles,
Which truly most abhorred are,
Let every patriot invoke
The power of Law and Order.

Some people may have different views
Of how best to enforce it—
Now Buckingham's opinion was—
And firmly I endorse it :
" Of all the methods I have tried,
The hangman and the sword are
The stoutest means to propagate
Respect for ' Law and Order ' ! "

CHORUS :

Against all other principles,
Which truly most abhorred are,
Let every patriot invoke
The power of Law and Order.

Now let the clergy inculcate
In all their prayers and sermons,
How blest peculiarly are we
Above the French and Germans;
And let their admonition be :—
" These blessings the reward are
Of our unbounded loyalty,
And love of ' Law and Order.' "

Against all other principles, etc.

In every nursery and school,
  And barrack-room and prison,
Let sheets be stuck upon the walls
  Conspicuous to the vision.
On which in ornamental text,
  With neat appropriate border,
Set forth the words " Sedition shun,
  And reverence ' Law and Order '."
    Against all other principles, etc.

And let us sing, " God save the Queen,"
  We could not do without her,
And all the peers and gentlefolks
  She likes to keep about her;
And while our voices and our hearts
  In glorious accord are,
Acclaim the peerless apothegm
  Of " Long live ' Law and Order '."
    Against all other principles, etc. (1889)

A Toast

WITH Freedom in our hearts,
  And our glasses in our hands;
With a comradeship and Cause
  Electric thro' all lands:
Here we stand—all rebels true!
  And we pledge the joy we feel
In the battle that we bear,
  In our Cause—the Commonweal.
    Let our glasses ring!

Never while the poor abide,
  And the weaker are oppress'd,
Shall we give Oppression peace,
  Shall we give our efforts rest.
What tho' we be as one,
  And the enemy a host?—
We'll battle and we'll win,
  Right will yet be uppermost!
    Let our glasses ring!

A curse on tyrants all!
  On oppressors everyone!
On every shape of wrong
  That blackens in the sun:
A blessing on all those
  Who battle for the right;
To their hearts—increase of hope,
  To their hands—increase of might!
    Let our glasses three times ring:
      One—Oppression's knell,
      Two—The people free,
      Three—Let us ring it well—
      Our friends where'er they be!

(1892)

The Children's International

HERE we gather in a ring,
  Here a garland fresh we fling,
  Flowers are we just blossoming,
    Blossoming together.

Chorus:

We will up and march away, march away,
March away, march away, march away,
march away,
We will up and march away, march away,
Marching all together.

Good folks all, a word with you,
What a world to bring us to!
We shall make the world anew,
Boys and girls together.

We will up, etc.

We are children, but some day
We'll be big and strong, and say
None shall slave, and none shall slay,
All shall work together.

We will up, etc.

Hand to hand, how far we reach,
Each for all, and all for each;
Thus we play, and thus we teach—
Hearts and hands together.

We will up, etc.

Now our clasping hands we raise,
Holding high a crown of praise,
Crown of hope for better days—
Nations linked together.

We will up, etc.

Forward, stepping row by row,
Waves of freedom, on we flow;
Singing, shining as we go,
Comrades all together.

We will up, etc. (1908)

The Shan Van Vocht*

(Tune : " The Shan Van Vocht.")

HEAVEN'S blessing on the head
Of the Shan Van Vocht!
They thought that she was dead—
The dear old Shan Van Vocht!
But she's still alive, you see,
With her wondrous prophecy—
Immortal may she be,
Our own dear Shan Van Vocht!

There's a rumpus in the town!
Lo, the Shan Van Vocht!
Cries the Mayor in his gown,
" What, the Shan Van Vocht!
Lived she not in ancient times?
Died she not in many climes?
Faith, there's mischief in the rhymes
Of the Shan Van Vocht."

*Gaelic: Little old woman, or spaewife. In Celtic folklore and song she is traditional and emblematic of the wit, wisdom and good fortune of the people's cause.

Oh, the winsomeness and sooth
  Of the Shan Van Vocht!
And the ever-sweetening youth
  Of the Shan Van Vocht!
To her gown the children cling,
Wives their arms around her fling,
And the poor their blessings bring
  To the Shan Van Vocht.

While at work, someone will say,
  "Hush!—the Shan Van Vocht!"
And we thought you far away—
  Ah! our Shan Van Vocht!
Often by the fire at night
She comes in—just like a sprite!
And we're witched till morning light
  With the Shan Van Vocht.

By what token may we know
  She's the Shan Van Vocht?
Wears she red cap or sabots,
  This dear Shan Van Vocht?—
By her tidings glad and true,
By her love outstretched to *you*,
By your own heart leaping through
  To the Shan Van Vocht.

For our love what shall we give
  To the Shan Van Vocht?
For our love, we'll toil and live
  For the Shan Van Vocht!
She's the dawning of our day,
She's the promise of our May,
She's for ever and for aye
  Our own dear Shan Van Vocht!

The Rhyme of Johnny Free

HERE'S good luck and right good cheer,
  To Johnny Free!
Whose fame is far—and near:
  Where'er *he* be,
There's a shaking of old bones,
There's a quaking 'mong the drones,
There's a tumbling down of thrones,
  One, two, three!

For the Devil is not dead,
  Says Johnny Free;
He's alive—sting, hoof, and head—
  Says Johnny Free.
He's in profit and in rent,
He's on Labour's shoulders bent,
And he sits in Parliament,
  And in P.C.

Not with smooth and silken words
  Speaks Johnny Free;
But with precepts sharp as swords,
  Right dauntlessly;
Making proclamation bold,
As the prophets spake of old,
When the good times were foretold
  Yet to be.

Hear the beating of Heaven's drum!
  Cries Johnny Free;
Lo, a mighty storm shall come
  (As you shall see)
Which shall tyranny o'erthrow,
And the mountains be brought low,
As foreshadowed long ago
  In Judee.

First, the land we shall acquire,
  Says Johnny Free;
By what methods shall transpire,
  Says Johnny Free;
Railways, mines and their contents,
And then all the implements
Of production and per cents,
  Says Johnny Free.

These preliminaries done,
  Says Johnny Free,
We'll have fairly well begun
  The Jubilee!
Then the sun's glad zone shall bind
In one brotherhood mankind;
War be evermore consigned
  Beneath the sea!

But what, should they resist,
  Johnny Free?
The Landlord and Capitalist—
  The bourgeoisie?
With what?—with sword and gun?
Nay, that won't be fight, but fun—
Why, we're a hundred to their one,
  Laughs Johnny Free.

The rich folk and the great
  Fear Johnny Free;
The old parties of the State
  Scorn Johnny Free!
They have cast him into jail,
But stone walls do not avail,
Thus the spirit shall prevail,
  Says Johnny Free.

The editor looks wise
  At Johnny Free;
" Humph, he don't advertise,
  Don't Johnny Free;
There's some truth in what he teaches,
But our patrons it impeaches,
We will just suppress your speeches,
  Johnny Free! "

The clergy are perplexed
  With Johnny Free;
They would like to quote a text
  At Johnny Free:
For their sermons and their prayers
With their practice he compares,
And the " Fifth of Matthew " bears
  Out Johnny Free.

So hurrah, and loud applause
  For Johnny Free!
And good luck to our good cause!
  Johnny Free;
Long live the Commonweal,
World-wide as the heart's appeal,
Bound in brotherhood, not steel,
  From sea to sea.

(1885. Completed May, 1920)

La Commune

DOWN in France in seventy-one,
Flashed a flame out of the sun:
Flashed and cleft the cannon's smoke
Where her wondering eyes awoke.

Right beneath the barricade
In a trench they found her laid;
Angry bullets o'er her sped,
Round her lay the martyr'd dead.

Her first cry was smothered in
Dying shrieks and cannon din,
She was baptised in a flood
Of Parisian workmen's blood.

What a world in which to fling
A human soul! a fosterling!
Loving hands of refugees
Bore her safely o'er the seas.

Outcast, stricken, froward, wild—
O'er the world a vagrant child,
Long she fared, her rebel feet
Torn by prison floor and street.

Now how fairly hath she grown!
Grace of curve and strength of bone,
Flash of eyes—love that will set
The world aflame with freedom yet.

No mere mortal form is she,
But our faith's divinity;
In the dreaming of her eyes
Gleams the earthly paradise.

Hand to hurt, or tongue to shame—
Who shall risk them in the flame
Of our love? Lo, at a word
Millions would uplift the sword.

Yet the sword its power shall cease—
Her might is the might of peace:
Might of peace, of love, of joy,
That which nothing can destroy.

She has come to be our Queen,
Queenlier than Queen has been:
Queen of life, our Queen of May,
Ours for ever and for aye.

Revolution

LO, they come with hope abounding;
Their march is in the street;
Oppression's doom is sounding
In the tramping of their feet.

They, the toilers of the city;
They, the toilers of the field;
For whom Mercy had no pity,
And Justice had no shield.

They march, their hearts are glowing
With the fire of Freedom's breath;
Their hands have the bestowing
Of the gift of life or death.

The heroic dead arisen,
March exultant by their side;
And from exile and from prison
Come their comrades glorified.

Their hopes are as the morning,
As the quieting of the night—
As a clarion blast of warning,
As a sweet song of delight.

Yea, their hearts throb with a gladness
As if their blood were wine,
And their brains burn with a madness
Which shall yet be deemed divine.

For a vision shines before them,
Making all the daylight dim:
And its glory trembles o'er them
Like the flight of cherubim.

And within its bright unfolding
The "Glorious times to be"
Which long in dark beholding
Now in noontide light they see.

The Dream of the Earthly Paradise

THERE is a prophecy come down the ages,
Persisting through the long, blood-soaken years;
From mind to mind, of poets, seers, and sages,
Tracking its way, laving men's hopes and fears.

Like a pure mountain spring that wells forth sparkling
Far up the misty height, and bright descends
From rock to rock, through dells and mosses darkling,
Widening and deepening as it onwards wends,

Till it shall flow, a broad, abounding river,
Coursing through fertile lands and cities fair:
A Nile of civilisation, a godlike giver
Of life and joy to peoples everywhere. (1920)

Two Invocations to Freedom

1. (1881.)

THE wild wind shrieking loudly through the night,
The roar of streams and waterfalls that dash,
The crashing thunder, the rain's gleeful splash,
Adown the darkness from the rocky height:

O wild song of the tempest and the rain!
Thy mighty minstrelsy makes glad my soul;
I listen to thy music roll and roll
From the black sky and mountain peak and plain.

In the loud, matchless measures of thy chords—
  Song of the mountain tempest, bold and free!
  There is an utterance of liberty
Surpassing all the power of human words.

With what fierce joy thy swift and cleaving blast
  Blows down the torrent steep with shattering strength—
  O Freedom, has the time not come at length
To send *thy* tempest through the darkness vast?

Yea, let thy power omnipotent go forth
  With storm and lightnings through the hearts of men,
  Let thy strong thunders speak, till hill and glen
Reverberate thy accents o'er the earth.

With searching fire, and wrath, and judgment come,
  And cleave and crash for ever in the dust
  The cities, rottening with greed and lust,
Quench their foul incense in thy cleansing doom!

Flash!—flash! O see, O hearken, Freedom—thou!
  Can'st thou abide and slumber in thy bed?
  Is not the time for sloth and dreaming fled?
Waits not the Day on the horizon now?

2. (1919.)

WHERE sleeps, O Freedom, thy resistless might?
  Thy flameless bolts are sunken in the sod;
  Be thou no more as Jupiter, but God!—
Let thy strong love be lifted in our sight.

Yea, be thou God! and give to us a sign—
  Hold fast the earth with healing in thy hand,
  That we may feel thee, and so understand
That power and peace are adequately thine.

Thy storms, thy thunders and thy terrors cease;
  Send forth thy sun!—make sweet and pure the earth,
  That in the hearts of nations may have birth
The sovereignty of fellowship and peace.

Hallowed no more be wrath and strife and death:
  The torches glimmering in the sepulchres:
  Life is thy bride, so let thy strength be hers,
Let her arise rejoicing in thy breath.

Bring forth the Golden Years: O Golden Years!—
  When man's last fear of man shall pass away,
  And a great gladness shall suffuse the day,
And a new song ascend amidst the spheres.

A May Day Pæan

SHE comes, down-stepping from the steeds of morning,
  Her feet bright with the dewdrops of the hills;
Her wind-woven tresses all devices scorning;
  Her radiance the air with pleasure fills.

She comes, the fairest of Earth's sun-given daughters,
  Enrobed in radiance orient as the dawn;
And joy, sweet as the fall of sunny waters,
  Leaps in all hearts her beauty shines upon.

All things of gladness are awake to greet her;
  The flowers spring rapturously in field and glade;
The birds sing louder, all the ways smell sweeter;
  The forest younglings frolic unafraid.

She is our May! The well-beloved, the chosen
  Queen of our day-dreams, golden hopes and song!
How we have waited her!—what dark and frozen
  Fears lay upon our hearts these winters long!

She comes to dwell with us down in the valleys,
  To be our Queen, encrowned with love and joy;
Our hearts her throne, our cottages her palace;
  Her swordless realm no sword can ere destroy.

She comes to fill our villages and meadows
  With life abloom, and fruitage of blithe hands;
And give enchantment to the woodland shadows,
  With children playing in their fairy bands.

The cities, too, shall wake and burst asunder
  Their bonds, and be no more as reeking sties;
And with the valleys vie with works of wonder,
  Upraising glowing towers into the skies.

She comes, and lo ! our hearts leap as from prison,
  Glad of our fellows, fearless of their wrong—
Knowing deliverance has at last arisen :
  No more shall love be weak, or terror strong.

Sing, sing our hearts ! Fling forth our song as garlands ;
  Make sweet her way, make beautiful our mirth :
So shall the nations sing, and all the far lands
  Join in one song as noon goes round the earth.

A Vanished World

OH that the fabled Elfin world were true,
  And all the wondrous scenes of fairyland !
  With what quick-beating pulses would we stand
Within this dell and its deep winding view !

Alas, the night has surely lost for ever
  The mystery and magic that once made
  The glen, the rocky dell and leafy glade
Palaces of enchantment. Alas ! never

Shall we again with listening steps behold
  The wood nymphs braid their tresses 'neath the trees,
  Nor hear in the swift rustlings of the breeze
The Erl-King's pageant gliding through the wold.

Maybe *this* dim and narrow cave has been
  A secret entrance to Titania's hall,
  Where many a cantrip, court and festival
Were held in fealty to the Fairy Queen !

Here in this plot some urchin may have spied
  The goblins' revel in the midnight dim;
  And 'twixt the tree roots in their orgies grim
Crawl monstrous dragons, spiney and red-eyed;

Or, lurking in some hollow, suddenly
  Swarm forth swart legions from the under-world,
  Those earth-fire denizens by whom were hurled
Mountains like pebbles into lake and sea.

In Times Olden

TRUE minstrelsy is dead! In the times olden
  The bard was welcomed, glad, at every door;
  By cottar's fire, and in halls blazon'd golden,
To eager ears his lays he chanted o'er.

I see the housewife sit, her baby hushing,
  Watching with curious eye the minstrel's face;
The young lass bending by her lover blushing,
  The spinning wheel, the bow upon the brace.

I see the baron's hall, feast-spread, torch-lighted;
  Proud knights and guerdoned ladies gathered round;
The trophies of the hunt, of wrongs requited;
  The horn, the falcon and the faithful hound.

We have gone back from beauty; we have parted
  With much that sweetened toil and compensed strife:
The glee, the merry-making, the light-hearted
  Song, and dance, and play of olden life.

The Yule-log and the May-pole; the fantastic
  Masques and pageants, festivals and fairs;
The thousand interludes that made elastic
  The length of days, their joys and toils and cares.

Now, minstrelsy and mirth no longer enter
  Deeply into our lives : they do but trim
The dull exterior,—the soul, the centre,
  Is grown more sombre, wearyful and grim.

No more the horn of forester a-roaming;
  The shepherd's pipe among the yellow broom;
The maid's blithe song a-milking in the gloaming;
  The weaver's merry ditty at the loom.

No more the song that swung the blacksmith's hammer;
  The miller's lay as jocund as his wheel,—
But hark, the dreary, dull, inhuman clamour,
  The ceaseless blasphemy of steam and steel!

Yet when the winds of February are blowing,
  And the keen frost is hard upon the fields;
Unseen the germs are quickening and growing
  Of all the flowers and fruits that summer yields.

Shall we, beholding the dark winter's blighting,
  Believe that cold and dark must ever be?
That summer days in radiant bloom delighting
  Are poet's dreams, which we shall never see?

Alone upon the hills by night o'ertaken,
  Have we not feared lest day might never come?
When lo, the dawn! the wondrous valleys waken,
  The skylark warbles and the wild bees hum!

Maybe some morning when we wake from dreaming,
  The vision shall not perish from our eyes;
But will grow brighter with the sunlight streaming,
  And the lark singing in the clear blue skies.

Empyrean: A Rhapsody

As left to his Comrades, June 4, 1920.

THE glory of a summer day
  Is round me as I stand,
Where full a hundred hills array
Their banners round the land;
  Fold upon fold
  Of green and gold,
And purple, far expand.

High on a pinnacle upborne,
  Half-way into the sky;
Across the pathway of the morn,
  Almost I seem to fly;
  But at my feet,
  Blinking most sweet,
The mountain heath I spy.

I spy the mountain heath, yet feel
  Rejoiced to glide through space,
Breasting its blue waves as a keel
  Against the tide's swift race;
    While still I hold
    Fast to this old
  Grey rock's unyielding base.

An old grey rock, whose visage stern
  The morn upleaps to kiss;
Where nightly the white mists return,
  Nor take his frown amiss:
    And while they sleep,
    His grave eyes keep
  Watch over the abyss.

How glad it is once more to breathe
  Outside the city's walls!—
But yesterday I walked beneath
  The shadow of St. Paul's,
    Where myriad fold
    Through deeps untold
  A monster dragon crawls.

And hardly in my ears are dead
  The hopeless surge and din;
And hardly from my eyes is fled
  The vision of its sin—
    Of life grown foul,
    Of prey and prowl,
  And soulless gape and grin.

But here, where all things seem to rise
  As with a shout of joy,
To join the pageant of the skies
  And bear the sun convoy—
    The God and King
    Of everything,
  Warm-hearted as a boy,—

Here comes no marring sound or sight
  Of human lust or gain :
The ever-purifying light,
  Flashing from hill and plain,
    Cleanses the soul,
    Making it whole
  And sweet from wound and stain.

Yea, here the soul its wounds may heal,
  The soul regain its wings;
And the heart grow too big to feel
  The prick of little things—
    Here break the crust,
    The clay and rust,
  Of selfish hardenings.

Here where the ever-wreathing years
  Roll, break and ebb and flow,
The wondrous scene unchanged appears—
  The blasts, the floods, the snow,
    Pass as a breath,
    While still beneath
  The ancient banners blow.

A magian tower! whence o'er the crest
  Of centuries I scan
The primal world, while yet its breast
  With molten torrents ran;
    The ebb and flow
    Of epochs slow,
  Long ere man's reign began:

The mighty travail of the earth,
  Her vast volcanic throes,
The giant mountains come to birth,
  Titanic powers jocose,
    Making huge rents
    In continents—
  Ocean her bed disclose.

I watch the frozen tide creep back
  Towards the polar zone;
And life resurging in its track,
  Of herb and tree wild-grown,
    The migrant birds,
    The huge, gaunt herds,
  The mighty mastodon.

I see the hills cast off the yoke
  Of Alpine frost, and lo!
The coming of the birch and oak,
  The rose, the plum, the sloe;
    The brotherhood
    Of field and wood,
  And England all aglow!

* * * * * *

YET countless courses of the sun,
The summers flush and fade;
And, lo! at last the Master one—
He in "God's image made"—
From cave and mound,
Prowling around,
Swart, ominous, afraid.

Outcast from wood and wild, as though
Under a primal curse;
Marked as by nature's self her foe—
A brood she feared to nurse:
All living things
On feet and wings,
Shy of his look averse.

Whence come?—Out of the distant East,—
He leaves his human trace;
Somewhat of deity: a beast—
Higher and yet more base:
A ceaseless quest,
An urge, behest,
Furrowed upon his face.

And this is man: the coming lord
Of all the earth's domain;
Our human sire, whose will and word
Shall destiny ordain;
And earth, and air
And ocean, bear
His inexorable chain.

From whose rude hands shall yet arise
An Athens, Thebes, and Rome;
From whose dull brain the vast emprise
Of Plato, Newton, come;
The minds elate
That consecrate
Temple and catacomb.

O strange, unwelcome wight, to whom
The gift of life we owe;
O strange Pleiocene sire, for whom
We feel no human glow—
Dreeing his fate
To man's estate
A myriad years ago!

* * * * * *

YET countless courses of the sun,
In far-off primal days:
Lo, comes a host (and many a one),
Creeping into yon bays:
And far across
Upland and moss
Glistens their alien gaze—

Comes, as if wind-blown with the mist
Of morning o'er the seas,
From a far folk (so fate did list),
Hither, as hiving bees,
To a new bower,
Richer in flower,
'Midst sheltering hills and trees.

While clings the sea-wind to their hair,
  The sea-weed to their feet,
They hie their way, O valley fair,
  Into thy rare retreat,
    While all agleam
    Thy songful stream
  Hastens their steps to greet.

With joy their journeying they spare,
  Their spears strike in the ground;
With joy their wives and babes they bear
  Into the land new found;
    And through the haze
    Of night upblaze
  A hundred hearths around.

Our fathers they: strong-limbed and rude
  For winter's wolf and wind;
Well knew their after-foes their mood:
  Yet guileless folk and kind,
    With simple skill
    Of forge and mill
  And loom, and reeds entwined.

Adown the years still gleam their spears,
  And in our common speech
Lingers their laughter and their tears,
  Their mysteries, and each
    Yuletide and May
    We homage pay
  Their feast-fires on the beach.

* * * * * *

II.

BUT hark! what sweet enchantment floats
Out in the airy deep!—
Throb, throb, and thrill the lark's clear notes
In the still noon, whose sleep
Is undisturbed,
Save by th' uncurbed
Bleat of the mountain sheep.

Far down the vale upon the green—
A mere speck to the eye—
The old grey church peers through the sheen,
As though fain to descry
Some friendly face
That might retrace
Memories of days gone by.

There stands alone an old stone tower—
That, when the night winds sweep,
And the tough yew trees, frightened, cower,
And the pale tombstones peep—
Stirs its old bones,
Mumbles and groans,
As dreaming in its sleep.

And there, almost beneath my toe!
The old mill rests, forlorn;
Around it, as fresh-fallen snow,
The plum tree and the thorn,
Their blossoms spread,
As for a bed
Upon a bridal morn.

See, branching through the ancient weald,
  The old road and the new,
Like silken braids loosely unreeled,
  Far-stretching out of view—
    Down in green nooks,
    Bridging the brooks
  That laugh as they run through.

And lo, what invitation sweet
  Yonder invites the eye!—
Where the two valleys fondly meet,
  And linked together lie—
    A very bower,
    Where every hour
  Fresh hues and shadows vie.

Fair as if nature's self had sought
  Cunningly to prepare
In this fair land, a fairest spot,
  An Eden passing fair;
    No scene more choice
    Could eyes rejoice
  Than she has fashioned there.

So fair, so richly dowered, replete,
  Each season's need supplied;
With timber, stone, and wool and wheat,
  And marketing spread wide;
    Her argosies
    On the near seas
  Harvesting every tide.

Now fair as a forsaken bride
  Who calmly hides her pain;
Sweet as a mother who, moist-eyed,
  Looks wistfully down the lane,
    Thinking of feet
    Whose patter sweet
  Will never come again.

So fair! now so bereft!—her reign
  O'er pleasant stir has fled;
Extinct her ancient chatelaine
  Of thriving homes that spread
    Her largesse wide
    On every side,
  And sturdy peasants bred.

All gone! The homesteads and the folk
  Erased from off the scene;
The thatched roofs and the dreamy smoke,
  The market musterings, keen
    With news and tales
    From neighbouring vales,
  The pastimes on the green.

The ploughman singing to the vale,
  The herdman on the hill,
The milkmaid lilting at her pail,
  The chatter of the mill;
    The forge's clang
    That all day rang
  Its tattoo of goodwill!

The old man hirpling on his staff,
  Gossiping at the door,
The buxom dame, whose merry laugh
  Lit up his heart once more,
    As off she flew
    To bake or brew
  Or spin another score.

All ceased! its simple tune of life:
  Piped out, its little lay!
The click of shuttles that made strife
  With drowsiness all day;
    The maiden's sigh,
    The new-born cry,
  The children's noisy play.

All gone, as if by some fell flood
  Swept out into the sea,
Or by war's wrack, in flame and blood,
  Blasted from things that be.
    No judgment less,
    So one would guess,
  Wrought such calamity.

O ye who boast of England's fame,
  Of England's wealth and pride,
Lo, here is written England's shame,
  Wide as the vales are wide;
    No flood or war
    Smote the vales bare—
  But Mammon's sucking tide.

And o'er its woe God's day and night
Have woven a mystic screen,
With weft and woof of dark and light,
The centuries between,
Through which, in vain,
Our eyes we strain,
Glints of the past to glean.

* * * * * *

A NEW light from the noontide breaks,
Suffusing o'er the hills;
A marvellous minstrelsy awakes,
As of unnumbered rills;
A luminous mist
Of amethyst
The listening valley fills!

A mist in which is lifted up
A vision in my sight,
Wherein as by some magic cup—
Spellbound, in Time's despite—
I gaze and see
In phantasy
The world's new plumaged flight.

From East to West the gates of day
Pour forth a glorious band;
Behold, the Daughters of the May,
Uplift life's new Command;
Below, above,
The might of Love—
The might of God's right hand.

O happier days, O happier hearts,
  O children yet to be;
O Toil redeemed, O glowing Arts,
  From sordidness set free;
    For ye unseen
    Till now has been
  Man's long adversity.

For ye the hearts of heroes flamed,
  The martyrs' limbs were torn;
Whose glory as a cloud has framed
  An archway o'er the morn,
    Through which our souls
    To higher goals
  With sun and stars are borne.

For ye are now their battles won,
  Their vanquished hosts upraised;
The victories of the sword undone,
  The conquerors abased.
    For ye, the spires
    Of Moloch fires
  Have ceased at last to blaze.

No more shall war's dark terrors stem
  The fountains of the sun;
O happier youth! O mightier men!
  Promethean race begun—
    Victors new-found,
    From self unbound—
  Man's loftiest freedom won.

The children, yea, the children come,
The children Blake foreknew;
With twinkling steps and merry hum—
Blossoms of every hue;
A joyous throng
Dancing along—
The Golden Age anew!

See, too, the hills and plains burst forth
As a great golden flower!
The world abloom in a new birth
Of field and town and tower;
Garden and wild
Linked, reconciled,
In man's redeeméd power.

A new accord of human kind
With Earth's domain and brood,
A large compassion, freely bind
A common brotherhood:
A gentleness,
A sweet excess
Of will for all things good.

Cities reborn, in them outshines
A nobler art than shone
On the Acropolis, or the shrines
Of Florence and Rouen:
Gazing, I seem
Rapt in a dream
With Shelley and St. John.

With Zion's mighty prophets, they
  Whose souls burn in the van;
Plato and More, who lit the way
  With dawn ere dawn began;
    With Morris, whose
    Thrice-gifted muse
  Sang the new march of man.

Fling forth my song with joy to meet
  The birth of coming days;
Fling forth my song with joy to greet
  The choir of joy and praise,
    Whose chant exhales
    Up from the dales—
  Love's joyous Marseillaise!

Mighty fulfilment, from the first
  Quickening in Time's womb:
The Earth at last in splendour burst
  Whole, in Elysian bloom:
    O wondrous leaven!
    Kingdom of Heaven,
  Thy reign on Earth has come.

* * * * * *

THE glory of a summer day
Fades gently on the hills,
The evening breaks its solemn ray,
Another splendour fills :
The heavens . .
The . . . .
Besprent with daffodils.

Night, night with stately gesture,
Calls forth her wondrous spheres,
And draws her sacred vesture
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . . .

Awake, or still in vision-bound,
My Magian Tower I quit,
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
And as I leap,
The startled sheep
Bound ghostly in the . .

(Left unfinished, June, 1920)

APPENDIX

A poem which Bruce wrote and published in the spring of 1880, when he was barely twenty-one, entitled "Empire Against Liberty: A Song for Nihilists," has not been included with his other poems, because of his later reprobation of its spirit, but it so fitly marks a stage of his evolution that we append a portion of it here.

We have seen how his inborn and ardent love of Liberty was fostered and intensified by his early associations, and by the stories of the heroes which he heard at his mother's knee. It is easy, therefore, to understand his flaming indignation against the Tsarist tyranny, and his passionate sympathy with the revolutionists who faced the worst tortures and death in attempting to end it. He flung himself into the support and championship of the latter with voice and pen, and even thought seriously for a time of joining them, and made some preparation to do so.

These feelings found powerful expression in the poem—even as will be seen to the advocacy of tyrannicide.

But, as time went on, Bruce became more and more convinced that no violence of any kind can be of real service in preparing the way to a higher form of society. Violence he came to see can only add new evils to those already existing. And he not only repudiated certain elements in this poem, but he drew a blue pencil across two of the poems addressed to his wife ("To My Betrothed" and "To My War-Maiden Wife') because of "their martial clang."

In his fine Preface to "The Minstrelsy of Peace" he has expressed his persuasion "that poetry and art derive their quality of genius from 'inspiration'—or, in other words, that song (and its equivalent in the artist) wells up within the poet, as within the skylark, from a source beyond the seat of the reasoning faculties, and that the source is itself the hidden fountain of all human wisdom and prophecy, as well as of the intuitions of beauty and happiness in life." And he shows at length that any glorification of war and violence is foreign, and even hostile, to the true nature of poetry.

Empire Against Liberty

To the Patriots Pestel, Ryelieff, Mouravieff, Bestoujeff, and Kahoffski, executed before the Citadel, St. Petersburg, July 25, 1826, by Tsar Nicholas.

THE dead do in the living live, and ye
Are leading now the sons of freedom on!—
The night is passing quickly, and the dawn
Breaks in the east—the dawn of Liberty!

Its beams are on your brows—a wreath of light!
But pale your cheeks—your hair now whiter grown—
Your country's sufferings have been your own
Through the long years of dark and cheerless night.

Your souls girt with a never-dying life,
Nor dungeon, nor the tomb hath quenched their fire!
Still do they burn with freedom's fierce desire,
Still eager thirst for Freedom's final strife!

I see your eyes reflect the morning's sheen—
I see your swords gleam bright! Oh, when shall we
Stand in its noontide, armourless, and see
The earth entranced in its rays serene?

Ye lead the sons of Freedom on!—they come,
To strike the Despot from his bloody throne,
To break the dungeon and the palace down,
And hail the convict and the exile home!

Ye lead the sons of Freedom on!—they come,
Asserting life, and liberty, and right,
Against the craft of selfishness and might,
That long hath held them impotent and dumb.

Ye lead the sons of Freedom on!—they come;
Your words are thrilling in their hearts,—a power
No Despot's chains can hold, nor dungeon tower,
Nor scaffold, nor the oblivion of the tomb!

* * * * * * *

APPENDIX

Ho, Citizens of Freedom!—by that name,
  Glorious as the sun! I here speak forth
  Against the Imperial Despot of the North—
Against his tyranny! Lo, I proclaim.

Humanity supreme! above domain
  Of Empire, Law, or Creed, or Despot's might,
  And no king, priest, or peasant hath the right
To cause his fellowmen to suffer pain!

Ho, Citizens of Freedom! every man
  Whose heart beats high for liberty and right;
  Who feels the throb of Freedom's keen delight;
And deems his fellow's happiness his own.

Look on the sun!—to-day he hath beheld
  An Empire chained—its liberty and life
  Trodden beneath a Despot's feet—its strife
For Right and Freedom by oppression quell'd.

Yea, it is so,—O'er Russia's vast domains,
  One man, to gratify his power and greed,
  Oppresses millions! Little doth he heed
The crime and misery by which he reigns.

There Desolation spreads her frozen wings,
  There Terror whispers in every wind,
  There Despotism walks abroad, and blind
Destruction gluts on human sufferings.

And he—the Tsar—the latest of a line
  Of blackest murderers as ever trod
  The earth,—is titled with the name of God;
"Lord of the Earth, Imperial, and divine!"

* * * * * * *

Reading last night a record of his crime,
  My heart grew sick, I ceased, and murmured low:
  "O England can it be that thou dost know
That these things are—and slumberest the time?"

I could not sleep,—I walked out in the night
To cool my fev'red brow—to ponder why
Such infamy could be. The dark blue sky
Glistened above with stars supremely bright.

Methought they gazed on me, as if to speak
In pity of my fellowmen who lay
Buried in dungeons, hidden from the day,
Tortured in fetters, weary, cold and weak.

Toiling the endless day in fulsome gloom,
Shivering in the damp and icy air,
With sickly faces, and long matted hair,
Digging like worms, the channels of their tomb.

And wherefore? O Heavens! How can such things be
Beneath the bright sun and on this fair earth!
Because against oppression, they stood forth,
And claimed the right of manhood—to be free!

Because upon the Despot who doth hold
His bloody sceptre dripping o'er the land—
They dared to raise their eyes and fearless stand;
Demanding justice manfully and bold!

Because against the Despot whose dark throne
Is piled upon a mountain heap of dead,
They spoke out fearlessly like men and said :—
" Wherefore, all our years in torture groan?"

Because they dared to say : " Shall he, one man!
Trample the lives of millions year by year—
Making the country desolate with fear,
And we not seek to stay him if we can?

.....
.....
Should he who hath all human law defied
And revelled in his country's tears and blood;

Yet be himself allowed to live, and shame,
  Humanity and justice? Heavens! is there
  No nobler Brutus now—no heart will dare
With one sure blow the people's right proclaim!"

* * * * * *

These words glowed like a furnace in my soul,
  Boiling my being's passion o'er.—"O Earth,
  The time shall be when Freedom shall go forth
A power Omnipotent from pole to pole!

"When mankind, conscious of their manhood, shall
  No longer grovel at the feet of kings,
  Nor pile abundance, by their sufferings
To glut the Despots, who their lives enthrall.

"Lo, I am weak, yet with my heart's voice I
  Will speak aloud in Freedom's sacred cause,
  Against all Tyrants and tyrannic laws,
Against all servitude and cruelty."

Then rise ye freemen for your fellowmen—
  For Liberty! and strike the Despot down!
  Break into fragments his blood-tarnished crown;
Let not a relic of his power remain!

The hireling hordes—the satraps who uphold
  His infamy, sweep from their dens of gain
  Those knaves and servile sycophants, who'd drain
Their brother's blood to gain a grain of gold.

Yes, with that strength that conscious right doth give
  That thrills thro' every nerve—thro' every vein;
  End with one blow this arch-oppressor's reign—
Suffer no Tyrant on this earth to live!

Suffer no power of man—no law, no creed,
  To tarnish human liberty and right;
  Guard with your heart and hand's supremest might
The birth-right of your being!—ye have need!

How grand! how glorious! Liberty appears
When struggling in the foremost front of war!
When patriots around their hearts' blood pour
To gain their rights, and dry their country's tears!

Oh, never while the light of yon bright sun
Gladdens the earth! may men ignobly cease
To lift their swords for freedom!—Hence! false Peace
'Twould cringe and cower beneath a Tyrant's throne!

No! nobler impulses shall lead the soul:
The love of Right—th' indignant scorn of wrong!
The hate of Despotism, and the strong
Impulse of Freedom, brooking no control!

And thou Humanity! when we shall stand
In the sun conquerors, we will gladly lay
Our swords upon thy altar, where they may
Unlifted lie—until thou dost command!

MANCHESTER :
AT THE NATIONAL LABOUR PRESS, LTD.
ALSO AT LONDON

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–Series 444

PR
6013
G461o

S R L F

SEE SPINE FOR BARCODE NUMBER